

POPULAR EDITION OF CAPTAIN MAYNE REID'S WORKS.



ENTERED AT THE POST OFFICE AT NEW YORK, N. Y. AT SECOND CLASS MAIL RATES.

Vol. XVIII. Published Every *Beadle & Adams, Publishers,* Ten Cents a Copy. No. 234
Week. 98 WILLIAM STREET, N. Y., April 18, 1883. \$5.00 a Year

THE HUNTERS' FEAST.

BY CAPTAIN MAYNE REID,

AUTHOR OF "THE HEADLESS HORSEMAN," "THE DEATH-SHOT," "THE SCALP HUNTERS," ETC., ETC.



THE HUNTERS GOING INTO CAMP.

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CHAPTER I.

A HUNTING PARTY.

To the traveler, St. Louis is a place of peculiar interest. He will hear around him the language of every nation in the civilized world. He will behold faces of every hue and variety of expression. He will meet with men of every possible calling.

All this is peculiarly true in the latter part of the summer season. Then the motley population of New Orleans fly from the annual scourge of the yellow fever and seek safety in the cities that lie further north. Of these St. Louis is a favorite "city of refuge,"—the Creole element of its population being related to that kindred race in the South, and keeping up with it this annual correspondence.

In one of these streams of migration I had found my way to St. Louis, some thirty-five years ago now. The place was at the time filled with loungers, who seemed to have nothing else to do but kill time. Every hotel had its quota, and in every veranda and at the corners of the streets you might see small knots of well-dressed gentlemen trying to entertain each other, and laugh away the hours. Most of them were the annual birds of passage from New Orleans, who had fled from "yellow Jack," and were sojourning here till the cold frosty winds of November should drive that intruder from the "Crescent City;" but there were many other *flâneurs* as well. There were travelers from Europe—men of wealth and rank who had left behind them the luxuries of civilized society to rough it for a season in the wild West—painters in search of the picturesque—naturalists whose love of their favorite study had drawn them from their comfortable closets to search for knowledge under circumstances of extremest difficulty—and sportsmen, who, tired of chasing small game, were on their way to the great plains to take part in the noble sport of hunting the buffalo. I was myself one of the last named fraternity.

I was not very long in the place before I was upon terms of intimacy with a large number of these loungers, and I found several, like myself, desirous of making a hunting expedition to the prairies. This chimed in with my plans to a nicety, and I at once set about getting up the expedition. I found five others who were willing to join me.

After several *conversaziones*, with much discussion, we succeeded at length in "fixing" our plan. Each was to "equip" according to his own fancy, though it was necessary for each to provide himself with a riding horse or mule. After that, a general fund was to be "raised," to be appropriated to the purchase of a wagon and team, with tents, stores, and cooking utensils. A couple of professional hunters were to be engaged; men who knew the ground to be traversed, and who were to act as guides to the expedition.

About a week was consumed in making the necessary preparations, and at the end of that time, under the sunrise of a lovely morning, a small cavalcade was seen to issue from the back suburbs of St. Louis, and, climbing the undulating slopes in its rear, head for the far-stretching wilderness of the prairies. It was our hunting expedition.

The cavalcade consisted of eight mounted men, and a wagon with its full team of six tough mules. These last were under the *manège* of "Jake"—a free negro, with a shining black face, a thick full mop, and a set of the best "ivories," which were almost always uncovered in a smile.

Peeping from under the tilt of the wagon might be seen another face strongly contrasting with that of Jake. This had been originally of a reddish hue, but sun-tan, and a thick sprinkling of freckles, had changed the red to golden yellow. A shock of fiery hair surmounted this visage, which was partially concealed under a badly-battered hat. Though the face of the black expressed good-humor, it might have been called sad when brought into comparison with that of the little red man, which peeped out beside it. Upon the latter, there was an expression irresistibly comic—the expression of an actor in broad farce. One eye was continually on the wink, while the other looked knowingly enough for both. A short clay pipe, stuck jauntily between the lips, added to the comical expression of the face, which was that of Mike Lanty, from Limerick. No one ever mistook the nationality of Michael.

Who were the eight cavaliers who accompanied the wagon? Six of them were gentlemen by birth and education. At least half that number were scholars. The other two laid no claim either to gentleness or scholarship—they were rude trappers—the hunters and guides of the expedition.

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A word about each of the eight, for there was not one of them without his peculiarity. First, there was an Englishman—a genuine type of his countrymen—full six feet high, well proportioned, with broad chest and shoulders, and massive limbs. Hair of a light-brown, complexion florid, mustache and whiskers full and hay-colored, but suiting well the complexion and features. The last were regular, and if not handsome, at least good-humored and noble in their expression.

The owner was in reality a nobleman of that class who, while traveling through the "States," have the good sense to carry their umbrella along, and leave their title behind them. To us he was known as Mr. Thompson, and, after some time, when we had all become familiar with each other, as plain "Thompson." It was only long after, and by accident, that I became acquainted with his rank and title; some of our companions do not know it to this day, but that is of no consequence. I mention the circumstance here to aid me in illustrating the character of our traveling companion, who was "close" and modest almost to a fault.

His costume was characteristic. A "tweed" shooting jacket, of course, with eight pockets—a vest of the same material with four—tweed trousers, and a tweed cap. In the wagon was the hat-box, of strong yellow leather, with straps and padlock. This was supposed to contain the dress hat; and some of the party were merry about it. But no—Mr. Thompson was a more experienced traveler than his companions thought him at first. The contents of the hat-case were sundry brushes—including one for the teeth—combs, razors, and pieces of soap. The hat had been left at St. Louis.

But the umbrella had not. It was then under Thompson's arm, with its full proportions of whalebone and gingham. Under that umbrella he had hunted tigers in the jungles of India—under that umbrella he had chased the lion upon the plains of Africa—under that umbrella he had pursued the ostrich and the vicuña over the pampas of South America; and now under that same hemisphere of blue gingham he was about to carry terror and destruction among the wild buffaloes of the prairies.

Besides the umbrella—strictly a weapon of defense—Mr. Thompson carried another, a heavy double-barreled gun, marked "Bishop, of Bond Street," no bad weapon with a loading of buck shot, and with this both barrels were habitually loaded.

So much for Mr. Thompson, who may pass for No. 1 of the hunting-party. He was mounted on a strong bay cob, with tail cut short, and English saddle, both of which objects—the short tail and the saddle—were curiosities to all of the party except Mr. Thompson and myself.

No. 2 was as unlike No. 1 as two animals of the same species could possibly be. He was a Kentuckian, full six inches taller than Thompson, or indeed than any of the party. His features were marked, prominent and irregular, and this irregularity was increased by a "cheekful" of half-chewed tobacco. His complexion was dark, almost olive, and the face quite naked, without either mustache or whiskers, but long straight hair, black as an Indian's, hung down to his shoulders. In fact, there was a good deal of the Indian look about him, except in his figure. That was somewhat slouched, with arms and limbs of over-length, loosely hung about it. Both, however, though not modeled after the Apollo, were evidently full of muscle and tough strength, and looked as though their owner could return the hug of a bear with interest. There was a gravity in his look, but that was not from any gravity of spirits; it was his swarth complexion that gave him this appearance, aided, no doubt, by several lines of "ambeer" proceeding from the corners of his mouth in the direction of the chin. So far from being grave, this dark Kentuckian was as gay and buoyant as any of the party. Indeed, a light and boyish spirit is a characteristic of the Kentuckian as well of all the natives of the Mississippi valley—at least such has been my observation.

Our Kentuckian was costumed just as he would have been upon a cool morning riding about the "woodland" of his own plantation, for a "planter" he was. He wore a "Jeans" frock, and over that a long-tailed overcoat of the best green blanket, with side pockets and flaps. His jeans pantaloons were stuck into a pair of heavy horse-leather pegged boots, sometimes known as "nigger" boots; but over these were "wrappers" of green baize, fastened with a string above the knees. His hat was a "broad-brimmed felt," costly enough, but somewhat crushed by being sat upon and slept in.

He bestrode a tall raw-boned steed that possessed many of the characteristics of the rider; and in the same proportion that the latter overtopped his companions, so did the steed outsize all the other horses of the cavalcade. Over the shoulders of the Kentuckian were suspended, by several straps, pouch, horn, and haversack, and resting upon his toe was the butt of a heavy rifle, the muzzle of which reached to a level with his shoulder.

He was a rich Kentucky planter, and known in his native State as a great deer-hunter.

Some business or pleasure had brought him to St. Louis. It was hinted that Kentucky was becoming too thickly settled for him—deer becoming scarce, and bear hardly to be found—and that his visit to St. Louis had something to do with seeking a new "location" where these animals were still to be met with in greater plenty. The idea of buffalo-hunting was just to his liking. The expedition would carry him through the frontier country, where he might afterward choose his "location"—at all events the sport would repay him, and he was one of the most enthusiastic in regard to it.

He that looms up on the retrospect of my memory as No. 3 was as unlike the Kentuckian, as the latter was to Thompson. He was a disciple of Esculapius—not thin and pale, as these usually are, but fat, red, and jolly. Our doctor was full of talk and joviality—generous to a fault. A fault, indeed; for, although many years in practice in various parts of the United States, and having earned large sums of money, at the date of our expedition we found him in St. Louis almost without a dollar, and with no great stock of patients. The truth must be told; the doctor was of a restless disposition, and liked his glass too well. He was a singer too, an amateur singer, with a voice equal to Mario's. That may partly account for his failure in securing a fortune. He was a favorite with all—ladies included—and so fond of good company, that he preferred the edge of the jovial board to the bedside of a patient.

The doctor still preserved his professional costume of black—somewhat russet by long wear—but this was modified by a close-fitting fur cap, and wrappers of brown cloth, which he wore around his short thick legs. He was not over-well mounted—a very spare little horse was all he had, as his funds would not stretch to a better. It was a quiet one, however, and carried the doctor and his "medical saddlebags" steadily enough, though not without a good deal of spurring and whipping. The doctor's name was "Jopper"—Dr. John Jopper.

A very elegant youth, with fine features, rolling black eyes, and luxuriant curled hair, was one of us. The hands were well formed and delicate; the complexion silky, and of nearly an olive tint; but the purplish-red broke through upon his cheeks, giving the earnest of health, as well as adding to the picturesque beauty of his face. The form was perfect, and full of manly expression, and the pretty sky-blue plaited pantaloons and close-fitting jacket of the same material, sat gracefully on his well-turned limbs and arms. These garments were of "cottonade," that beautiful and durable fabric peculiar to Louisiana, and so well suited to the Southern climate. A costly Panama hat cast its shadow over the wavy curls and pictured cheek of this youth, and a cloak of fine broad-cloth, with velvet facings, hung loosely from his shoulders. A slight mustache and imperial lent a manlier expression to his chiseled features.

This young fellow was a Creole of Louisiana—a student of one of the Jesuit Colleges of that State—and although very unlike what would be expected from such a dashing personage, he was an ardent, even passionate, lover of nature. Though still young, he was the most accomplished botanist in his State, and had already published several discoveries in the *Flora* of the South.

Of course the expedition was to him a delightful anticipation. It would afford the finest opportunity for prosecuting his favorite study in a new field; one as yet almost unvisited by the scientific traveler. The young Creole was known as Jules Besancon.

He was not the only naturalist of the party. Another was with us; one who had already acquired a world-wide fame; whose name was as familiar to the *savans* of Europe as to his own countrymen. He was already an old man, almost venerable in his aspect, but his tread was firm, and his arm still strong enough to steady his long, heavy, double-barreled rifle. An ample coat of dark blue covered his body; his limbs were enveloped in long buttoned leggings of drab cloth, and a cap of sable surmounted his high, broad forehead. Under this his blueish gray eye glanced with a calm but clear intelligence, and a single look from it satisfied you that you were in the presence of a superior mind. Were I to give the name of this person, this would readily be acknowledged. For certain reasons I cannot do this. Suffice it to say, he was one of the most distinguished of modern zoologists, and to his love for the study we were indebted for his companionship upon our hunting expedition. He was known to us as Mr. A—, the "hunter-naturalist." There was no jealousy between him and the young Besancon. On the contrary, a similarity of tastes soon brought about a mutual friendship, and the Creole was observed to treat the other with marked deference and regard.

I may set myself down as No. 6 of the party. Let a short description of me suffice. I was then but a young fellow, educated somewhat better than common; fond of wild sports; not indifferent to a knowledge of nature; fond almost to folly of a good horse, and possessing one of the very best; not ill-looking in the face, and

of middle stature; costumed in a light hunting-shirt of embroidered buckskin, with fringed cape and skirt; leggings of scarlet cloth, and cloth forage-cap, covering a flock of dark hair. Powder-flask and pouch of tasty patterns; belt around the waist, with hunting-knife and pistols—revolvers. A light rifle in one hand, and in the other a bridle-rein, which guided a steed of coal blackness; one that would have been celebrated in song by a troubadour of the olden time. A deep, Spanish saddle of stamped leather; holsters with bearskin covers in front; a scarlet blanket, folded and strapped on the croup; lazo and haversack hanging from the "horn"—*voilà tout!*

There are two characters still undescribed. Characters of no mean importance were they—the "guides." They were called respectively, Isaac Bradley and Mark Redwood. A brace of trappers they were, but as different from each other in personal appearance as two men could well be. Redwood was a man of large dimensions, and apparently as strong as a buffalo, while his *confrère* was a thin, wiry, sinewy mortal, with a tough, weazel-like look and gait. The expression of Redwood's countenance was open and manly, his eyes were gray, his hair light-colored, and huge brown whiskers covered his cheeks. Bradley, on the other hand, was dark—his eyes small, black, and piercing—his face as hairless as an Indian's, and bronzed almost to the Indian hue, with the black hair of his head closely cropped around it.

Both these men were dressed in leather from head to foot, yet they were very differently dressed. Redwood wore the usual buckskin hunting-shirt, leggings, and moccasins, but all of full proportions and well cut, while his large coon-skin cap, with the plume-like tail, had an imposing appearance. Bradley's garments, on the contrary, were tight-fitting and "skimped." His hunting-shirt was without cape, and adhered so closely to his body that it appeared only an outer skin of the man himself. His leggings were pinched and tight. Shirt, leggings, and moccasins were evidently of the oldest kind, and as dirty as a cobbler's apron. A close-fitting otter cap, with a Mackinaw blanket, completed the wardrobe of Isaac Bradley. He was equipped with a pouch of greasy leather hanging by an old black strap, a small buffalo-horn suspended by a thong, and a belt of buffalo-leather, in which was stuck a strong blade, with its handle of buckhorn. His rifle was of the "tallest" kind—being full six feet in height—in fact, taller than he was, and at least four-fifths of the weapon consisted of barrel. The straight, narrow stock was a piece of manufacture that had proceeded from the hands of the trapper himself.

Redwood's rifle was also a long one, but of more modern build and fashion, and his equipments—pouch, powder-horn and belt—were of a more tasty design and finish.

Such were our guides, Redwood and Bradley. They were no imaginary characters, these. Mark Redwood was a celebrated "mountain-man" at that time, and Isaac Bradley will be recognized by many when I give him the name and title by which he was then known—viz: "Old Ike, the Wolf-killer."

Redwood rode a strong horse of the half-hunter breed, while the "Wolf-killer" was mounted upon one of the scraggiest-looking quadrupeds it would be possible to imagine—an old mare "mustang."

CHAPTER II.

THE CAMP AND CAMP FIRE.

OUR route was west by south. The nearest point with which we expected to fall in with the buffalo was two hundred miles distant. We might travel three hundred without seeing one, and even much further at the present day; but a report had reached St. Louis that the buffalo had been seen that year upon the Osage River, west of the Ozark Hills, and toward that point we steered our course. We expected in about twenty days to fall in with the game. Fancy a cavalcade of hunters making a journey of twenty days to get upon the field! The reader will, no doubt, say we were in earnest.

At the time of which I am writing, a single day's journey from St. Louis carried the traveler clear of civilized life. There were settlements beyond; but these were sparse and isolated—a few small towns or plantations upon the main watercourses—and the whole country between them was an uninhabited wilderness. We had no hope of being sheltered by a roof until our return to the Mound City itself, but we had provided ourselves with a couple of tents, part of the freight of our wagon.

There are but few parts of the American wilderness where the traveler can depend upon wild game for a subsistence. Even the skilled hunter when stationary is sometimes put to his wits' end for "daily bread." Upon the "route" no great opportunity is found of killing game, which always requires time to approach it with caution. Although we passed through what appeared to be excellent cover for various species of wild animals, we reached our first camp without having ruffled either hair or feathers. In fact, neither bird nor quadruped had been seen, although almost every one of the party

had been on the lookout for game during most of the journey.

This was rather discouraging, and we reasoned that if such was to be our luck until we got into the buffalo range, we should have a very dull time of it. We were well provisioned, however, and we regretted the absence of game only on account of the sport. A large bag of biscuit, and one of flour, several pieces of "hung bacon," some dry ox-tongues, a stock of green coffee, sugar, and salt, were the principal and necessary stores. There were "luxuries," too, which each had provided according to his fancy, though not much of these, as every one of the party had had some time or other in his life a little experience in the way of "roughing it." Most of the loading of the wagon consisted of provender for our horses and mules.

We made fully thirty miles on the first day, and encamped by the edge of a small creek of clear water. Our camp was laid out in due form, and everything arranged in the order we designed habitually to follow.

Every man unsaddled his own horse—there are no servants in prairie-land.

Our horses and mules were picketed on a piece of open ground, each having his "trail rope," which allowed a circuit of several yards. The two tents were pitched side by side, facing the stream, and the wagon drawn up some twenty feet in the rear. In the triangle between the wagon and the tents was kindled a large fire, upon each side of which two stakes, forked at the top, were driven into the ground. A long sapling resting in the forks traversed the blaze from side to side. This was Lanty's "crane"—the fire was his kitchen.

Let me sketch the camp more minutely, for our first camp was a type of all the others in its general features. Sometimes indeed the tents did not front the same way, when these openings were set to "oblige the wind," but they were always placed side by side in front of the wagon. They were small tents of the old-fashioned conical kind, requiring only one pole each. They were of sufficient size for our purpose, as there were only three of us to each—the guides, with Jake and Lanty, finding their lodgment under the tilt of the wagon. With their graceful shape and snowy-white color against the dark-green foliage of the trees, they formed an agreeable contrast; and a *coup d'œil* of the camp would have been no mean picture to the eye of an artist. The human figures may be arranged in the following manner:

Supper is getting ready, and Lanty is decidedly at this time the most important personage on the ground. He is stooping over the fire, with a small but long-handled frying-pan, in which he is parching the coffee. It is already browned, and Lanty stirs it about with an iron spoon. The crane carries the large coffee-kettle of sheet iron, full of water upon the boil; and a second frying-pan, larger than the first, is filled with sliced ham, ready to be placed upon the hot cinders.

Our English friend Thompson is seated upon a log, with the hat-box before him. It is open, and he has drawn out from it his stock of combs and brushes. He has already made his ablutions, and is now giving the finish to his toilet, by putting his hair, whiskers, mustache, teeth, and even his nails, in order. Your Englishman is the most comfortable traveler in the world.

The Kentuckian is differently engaged. He is upon his feet; in one hand gleams a knife with ivory handle and long shining blade. It is a "bowie," of that kind known as an "Arkansas toothpick." In the other hand you see an object about eight inches in length, of the form of a parallelogram, and of a dark-brown color. It is a "plug" of real "James River tobacco." With his knife the Kentuckian cuts off a piece—a "chunk," as he terms it—which is immediately transferred to his mouth, and chewed to a pulp. This is his occupation for the moment.

The doctor, what of him? Doctor Jopper may be seen close to the water's edge. In his hand is a pewter flask, of the kind known as a "pocket pistol." That pistol is loaded with brandy, and Dr. Jopper is just in the act of drawing part of the charge, which, with a slight admixture of cool creek water, is carried aloft and poured into a very drouthy vessel. The effect, however, is instantly apparent in the lively twinkle of the doctor's round and prominent eyes.

Besancon is seated near the tent, and the old naturalist beside him. The former is busy with the new plants he has collected. A large portfolio-looking book rests upon his knees, and between its leaves he is depositing his stores in a scientific manner. His companion, who understands the business well, is kindly assisting him. Their conversation is very interesting, but every one else is too busy with his affairs to listen to it just now.

The guides are lounging about the wagon. Old Ike fixes a new flint in his rifle, and Redwood, of a more mirthful disposition, is occasionally cracking a joke with Mike or the "darker."

Jake is still busy with his mules, and I with my favorite steed, whose feet I have washed in the stream, and anointed with a little spare grease. I shall not always have the opportunity

of being so kind to him, but he will need it the less, as his hoofs become more hardened by the journey.

Around the camp are strewed our saddles, bridles, blankets, weapons, and utensils. These will all be collected and stowed under cover before we go to rest. Such is a picture of our camp before supper.

When that meal is cooked, the scene somewhat changes.

The atmosphere, even at that season, was cool enough, and this, with Mike's announcement that the coffee was ready, brought all the party—guides as well—around the blazing pile of logs. Each found his own platter, knife, and cup; and, helping himself from the general stock, set to eating on his own account. Of course there were no fragments, as a strict regard to economy was one of the laws of our camp.

Notwithstanding the fatigue always incidental to a first day's march, we enjoyed this *al fresco* supper exceedingly. The novelty had much to do with our enjoyment of it, and also the fine appetites which we had acquired since our luncheon at noon halt.

When the supper was over, smoking followed, for there was not one of the party who was not an inveterate burner of the "noxious weed." Some chose cigars, of which we had brought a good stock, but several were pipe-smokers. The zoologist carried a meerschaum; the guides smoked out of Indian calumets, of the celebrated steatite, or red claystone. Mike had his dark-looking "dudeen," and Jake his pipe of corn-cob and cane-joint shank.

Our English friend Thompson had a store of the finest Havanas, which he smoked with the grace peculiar to the English cigar-smoker; holding his cigar impaled upon the point of a knife-blade. Kentucky also smoked cigars, but his was half buried within his mouth, slanted obliquely toward the right cheek. Besancon preferred the paper cigarette, which he made extempore, as he required them, out of a stock of loose tobacco. This is Creole fashion—now also the *mode de Paris*.

A song from the doctor enlivened the conversation, and certainly so melodious a human voice had never echoed near the spot. One and all agreed that the grand opera had missed a capital "first tenor" in not securing the services of our companion.

The fatigue of our long ride caused us to creep into our tents at an early hour, and rolling ourselves in our blankets we went to sleep. Of course, everything had been carefully gathered in lest rain might fall in the night. The trail-ropes of our animals were looked to. We did not fear their being stolen, but horses on the first few days' journey are easily "stampeded," and will sometimes stray home again. This would have been a great misfortune, but most of us were old travelers, and every caution was observed in securing against such a result. There was no guard kept, though we knew the time would come when that would be a necessary duty.

CHAPTER III.

THE SECOND DAY.

THE prairie traveler never sleeps after day-break. He is usually astir before that time. He has many "chores" to perform, unknown to the ordinary traveler who rests in the roadside inn. He has to pack up his tent and bed, cook his own breakfast and saddle his horse. All this requires time, therefore an early start is necessary.

We were on our feet before the sun had shown his disk above the black-jacks. Lanty had the start of us, and had freshened up his fire. Already the coffee-kettle was bubbling audibly, and the great frying-pan perfumed the camp with an incense more agreeable than the odors of Araby.

The raw air of the morning had brought everybody around the fire. Thompson was pruning and cleansing his nails, the Kentuckian was cutting a fresh "chunk" from his plug of "James River," the doctor had just returned from the stream, where he had refreshed himself by a "nip" from his pewter flask, Besancon was packing up his portfolios, the zoologist was lighting his long pipe, and the "captain" was looking to his favorite horse, while inhaling the fragrance of an "Havana." The guides stood with their blankets hanging from their shoulders, silent and thoughtful.

In half an hour breakfast was over, the tents and utensils were restored to the wagon, the horses were brought in and saddled, the mules "hitched up," and the expedition once more on its way.

This day we made not quite so good a journey. The roads were heavier, the country more thickly timbered, and the ground more hilly. We had several small streams to ford, and this retarded our progress. Twenty miles was the extent of our journey.

We encamped again without any of us having killed or seen game. Although we had beaten the bushes on both sides of our course, nothing bigger than the red-bird, a screaming jay, or an occasional flight of finches, gratified our sight.

We reached our camp somewhat disappointed.

Even old Ike and Redwood came into camp without game, alleging also that they had not met with the sign of a living quadruped.

Our second camp was also on the bank of a small stream. Shortly after our arrival on the ground Thompson started out afoot, taking with him his gun. He had noticed a tract of marsh at no great distance off. He thought it promised well for snipe.

He had not been gone long when two reports echoed back, and then shortly after another and another. He had found something to empty his gun at.

Presently we saw him returning with a brace and a half of birds that looked very much like large snipe. So he thought them, but that question was set at rest by the zoologist, who pronounced them at once to be the American curlew. Curlew or snipe, they were soon divested of the feathery coat and placed in Lanty's frying-pan. Excellent eating they proved, having only the fault that there was not enough of them.

These birds formed the topic of our after-supper conversation, and then it generalized to the different species of wading birds of America, and at length that singular creature, the ibis, became the theme. This came round by Besancon remarking that a species of ibis was brought by the Indians to the markets of New Orleans, and sold there under the name of "Spanish curlew." This was the white ibis, which the zoologist stated was found in plenty along the whole southern coast of the United States. There were two other species, he said, natives of the warm parts of North America, the wood ibis, which more nearly resembles the sacred ibis of Egypt, and the beautiful sacred ibis, which last is rarer than the others.

Our venerable companion, who had the ornithology of America, if I may use the expression, at his fingers' ends, imparted many curious details of the habits of these rare birds. All listened with interest to his statements—even the hunter-guides, for, with all their apparent rudeness of demeanor, there was a dash of the naturalist in these fellows.

When the zoologist became silent, the young Creole took up the conversation, and related an adventure he had met with while in pursuit of these birds among the swamps of his native State.

It was evident that in the circle of the camp-fire there was more than one pair of lips ready to narrate some similar adventure, but the hour was late, and all agreed it would be better to go to rest. On to-morrow night, some other would take their turn; and, in fact, a regular agreement was entered into that each one of the party who had at any period of his life been the hero or participant in any hunting adventure should narrate the same for the entertainment of the others. This would bring out a regular "round of stories by the camp-fire," and would enable us to kill the many long evenings we had to pass before coming up with the buffalo. The conditions were that the stories should exclusively relate to birds or animals—in fact, any hunted game belonging to the *fauna* of the American Continent; furthermore, that each should contribute his *quota* of information about whatever animal should chance to be the subject of the narration—about its habits, its geographical range; in short, its general natural history, as well as the various modes of hunting it practiced in different places by different people. This, it was alleged, would render our camp-conversation instructive as well as entertaining.

The idea originated with the old hunter-naturalist, who very wisely reasoned that among so many gentlemen of large hunting experience he might collect new facts for his favorite science—for to just such men, and not to the closet-dreamer, is natural history indebted for its most interesting chapters. Of course every one of us, guides and all, warmly applauded the proposal, for there was no one among us averse to receiving a little knowledge of so entertaining a character. No doubt to the naturalist himself we should be indebted for most part of it; and his mode of communicating was so pleasant, that even the rude trappers listened to him with wonder and attention. They saw that he was no "greenhorn" either in wood-craft or prairie knowledge, and that was a sufficient claim to their consideration.

There is no character less esteemed by the regular "mountain man" than a "greenhorn,"—that is, one who is new to the ways of their wilderness life.

With the design of an early start, we once more crept into our several quarters and went to sleep.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PASSENGER PIGEONS.

AFTER an early breakfast we lit our pipes and cigars, and took to the road. The sun was very bright, and in less than two hours after starting we were sweltering under a heat almost tropical. It was one of those autumn days peculiar to America, where even a high latitude seems to be no protection against the sun, and his beams fall upon one with as much fervor as they would under the line itself. The first part of

our journey was through open woods of black-jack, whose stunted forms afforded no shade, but only shut off the breeze which might otherwise have fanned us.

While fording a shallow stream, the doctor's scraggy, ill-tempered horse took a fit of kicking quite frantic. For some time it seemed likely that either the doctor himself or his saddle-bags would be deposited in the bottom of the creek; but after a severe spell of whipping and kicking on the part of the rider, the animal moved on again. What had set it dancing? That was the question. It had the disposition to be "frisky," but usually appeared to be lacking in strength. The buzz of a horse-fly sounding in our ears explained all. It was one of those large insects—the "horse-bug"—peculiar to the Mississippi country, and usually found near watercourses. They are more terrible to horses than a fierce dog would be. I have known horses gallop away from them as if pursued by a beast of prey.

After the doctor's mustang had returned to proper behavior, we entered the bottom lands of a considerable stream. These were heavily timbered, and the shadow of the great forest trees afforded us a pleasant relief from the hot sun. Our guides told us we had several miles of such woods to pass through, and we were glad of the information. We noticed that most of the trees were beech, and their smooth, straight trunks rose like columns around us.

The beech is one of the most beautiful of American forest trees. Unlike most of the others, its bark is smooth, without fissures, and often of a silvery hue. Large beech trees standing by the path, or near a cross-road, are often seen covered with names, initials, and dates. Even the Indian often takes advantage of the bark of a beech tree to signalize his presence to his friends, or commemorate some savage exploit. Indeed, the beautiful, column-like trunk seems to invite the knife, and many a souvenir is carved upon it by the loitering wayfarer. It does not, however, invite the ax of the settler. On the contrary, the beechen woods often remain untouched, while others fall around them—partly because these trees are not usually the indices of the richest soil, but more from the fact that clearing a piece of beech forest is no easy matter. The green logs do not burn so readily as those of the oak, the elm, the maple, or poplar, and hence the necessity of "rolling" them off the ground to be cleared—a serious thing where labor is scarce and dear.

We were riding silently along, when all at once our ears were assailed by a strange noise. It resembled the clapping of a thousand pairs of hands, followed by a whistling sound, as if a strong wind had set suddenly in among the trees. We all knew well enough what it meant, and the simultaneous cry of "pigeons," was followed by half a dozen simultaneous cracks from the guns of the party, and several bluish birds fell to the ground. We had stumbled upon a feeding-place of the passenger-pigeon.

Our route was immediately abandoned, and in a few minutes we were in the thick of the flock, cracking away at them both with shot-gun and rifle. It was not so easy, however, to bring them down in any considerable numbers. In following them up we soon strayed from each other, until our party was completely scattered, and nearly two hours elapsed before we got back to the road. Our game-bag, however, made a fine show, and about forty brace were deposited in the wagon. With the anticipation of roast pigeon and "pot-pie," we rode on more cheerily to our night camp. All along the route the pigeons were seen, and occasionally large flocks whirled over our heads under the canopy of the trees. Satiated with the sport, and not caring to waste our ammunition, we did not heed them further.

In order to give Lanty due time for the duties of the *cuisine*, we halted a little earlier than usual. Our day's march had been a short one, but the excitement and sport of the pigeon-hunt repaid us for the loss of time. Our dinner-supper—for it was a combination of both—was the dish known in America as "pot-pie," in which the principal ingredients were the pigeons, some soft flour paste, with a few slices of bacon to give it a flavor. Properly speaking, the "pot-pie" is not a pie, but a stew. Ours was excellent, and as our appetites were in a similar condition, a goodly quantity was used up in appeasing them.

Of course the conversation of the evening was the "wild pigeon of America," and the following facts regarding its natural history—although many of them are by no means new—may prove interesting to the reader, as they did to those who listened to the relation of them around our camp-fire.

The "passenger" is less in size than the house pigeon. In the air it looks not unlike the kite, wanting the forked or "swallow" tail. That of the pigeon is cuneiform. Its color is best described by calling it a nearly uniform slate. In the male the colors are deeper, and the neck-feathers present the same changeable hues of green, gold and purple-crimson generally observed in birds of this species. It is only in the

woods, and when freshly caught or killed, that these brilliant tints can be seen to perfection. They fade in captivity, and immediately after the bird has been shot. They seem to form part of its life and liberty, and disappear when it is robbed of either. I have often thrust the wild pigeon, freshly killed, into my game-bag, glittering like an opal. I have drawn it forth a few hours after of a dull leaden hue, and altogether unlike the same bird.

As with all birds of this tribe, the female is inferior to the male, both in size and plumage. The eye is less vivid. In the male it is of the most brilliant fiery orange, inclosed in a well-defined circle of red. The eye is, in truth, its finest feature, and never fails to strike the beholder with admiration.

The most singular fact in the natural history of the "passenger" is their countless numbers. Audubon saw a flock that contained "one billion one hundred and sixteen millions of birds!" Wilson counted, or rather computed, another flock of "two thousand two hundred and thirty millions!" These numbers seem incredible. I have no doubt of their truth. I have no doubt that they are *under* rather than *over* the numbers actually seen by both these naturalists, for both made most liberal allowances in their calculations.

Where do these immense flocks come from?

The wild pigeons breed in all parts of America. Their breeding places are found as far north as the Hudson's Bay, and they have been seen in the Southern forests of Louisiana and Texas. The nests are built upon high trees, and resemble immense rookeries. In Kentucky one of their breeding-places was forty miles in length by several in breadth! One hundred nests will often be found upon a single tree, and in each nest there is but one "squab." The eggs are pure white, like those of the common kind, and like them, they breed several times during the year, but principally when food is plenty. They establish themselves in great "roosts," sometimes for years together, to which each night they return from their distant excursions—hundreds of miles, perhaps; for this is but a short fly for travelers who can pass over a mile in a single minute, and some of whom have even strayed across the Atlantic to England! They, however, as I myself have observed, remain in the same woods where they have been feeding for several days together. I have also noticed that they prefer roosting in the low underwood, even when tall trees are close at hand. If near water, or hanging over a stream, the place is still more to their liking, and in the morning they may be seen alighting on the bank to drink before taking to their daily occupation.

The great "roosts" and breeding-places are favorite resorts for numerous birds of prey. The turkey buzzard and carrion crow do not confine themselves to carrion alone. They are fond of live "squabs," which they drag out of their nests at pleasure. Numerous hawks and kites prey upon them, and even the great white-headed eagle may be seen soaring above, and occasionally swooping down for a dainty morsel. On the ground beneath move enemies of a different kind, both biped and quadruped. Fowlers with their guns and long poles, farmers with wagons to carry off the dead birds, and even droves of hogs to devour them. Trees fall under the ax, and huge branches break down by the weight of the birds themselves, killing numbers in their descent. Torches are used—for it is usually a night scene, after the return of the birds from feeding—pots of burning sulphur, and other engines of destruction. A noisy scene it is. The clapping of a million pair of wings, like the roaring of thunder; the shots, the shouts, men hoarsely calling to each other, women and children screaming their delight, the barking of dogs, the neighing of horses, the "crash" of breaking branches, and the "chuck" of the woodman's ax, all mingled together.

When the men—saturated with slaughter, and white with ordure—have retired beyond the borders of the roost to rest themselves for the night, their ground is occupied by the prowling wolf and the fox; the raccoon and the cougar; the lynx and the great black bear.

With so many enemies, one would think that the "passengers" would soon be exterminated. Not so. They are too prolific for that. Indeed, were it not for these enemies, they themselves would perish for want of food. Fancy what it takes to feed them! The flock seen by Wilson would require eighteen million bushels of grain every day!—and it, most likely, was only one of many such that at the time were traversing the vast continent of America. Upon what do they feed? it will be asked. Upon the fruits of the great forest—upon the acorns, the nuts of the beech, upon buckwheat, and Indian corn; upon many species of berries, such as the huckleberry, the hackberry, and the fruit of the holly. In the northern regions, where these are scarce, the berries of the juniper tree form the principal food. On the other hand, among the southern plantations, they devour greedily the rice, as well as the nuts of the chestnut-tree and several species of oaks. But their staple food is the beechnut, or "mast," as it is called. Of

this the pigeons are fond, and fortunately it exists in great plenty. In the forests of Western America there are vast tracts covered almost entirely with the beech-tree.

As already stated, these beechen forests of America remain almost intact, and so long as they shower down their millions of bushels of "mast," so long will the passenger pigeons flutter in countless numbers amidst their branches.

Their migration is semi-annual; but unlike most other migratory birds, it is far from being regular. Their flight is, in fact, not a periodical migration, but a sort of nomadic existence—food being the object which keeps them in motion and directs their course. The scarcity in one part determines their movement to another. When there is more than the usual fall of snow in the northern regions, vast flocks make their appearance in the middle States, as in Ohio and Kentucky. This may in some measure account for the overcrowded "roosts" which have been occasionally seen, but which are by no means common. You may live in the West for many years without witnessing a scene such as those described by Wilson and Audubon, though once or twice every year you may see pigeons enough to astonish you.

It must not be imagined that the wild pigeons of America are so "tame" as they have been sometimes represented. That is their character only while young at the breeding-places, or at the great roosts when confused by crowding upon each other, and mystified by torchlight.

Far different are they when wandering through the open woods in search of food. It is then both difficult to approach and hard to kill them. Odd birds you may easily reach; you may see them perched upon the branches on all sides of you, and within shot-range; but the *thick* of the flock, somehow or other, always keeps from one to two hundred yards off. The sportsman cannot bring himself to fire at single birds. No. There is a tree near at hand literally black with pigeons. Its branches creak under the weight. What a fine havoc he will make if he can but get near enough! But that is the difficulty; there is no cover, and he must approach as he best can without it. He continues to advance; the birds sit silent watching his movements. He treads lightly and with caution; he inwardly anathematizes the dead leaves and twigs that make a loud rustling under his feet. The birds appear restless; several stretch out their necks as if to spring off.

At length he deems himself fairly within range, and raises his gun to take aim; but this is a signal for the shy game, and before he can draw trigger they are off to another tree.

Some stragglers still remain, and at them he levels his piece and fires. The shot is a random one, for our sportsman, having failed to "cover" the flock, has become irritated and careless, and in all such cases the pigeons fly off with the loss of a few feathers.

The gun is reloaded, and our amateur hunter, seeing the thick flock upon another tree, again endeavors to approach it, but with like success.

CHAPTER V.

KILLING A COUGAR.

ALTHOUGH we had made a five miles' march from the place where we had halted to shoot the pigeons, our night-camp was still within the boundaries of the flock. During the night we could hear them at intervals at no great distance off. A branch occasionally cracked, and then a fluttering of wings told of thousands dislodged or frightened by its fall.

Before going to rest, a torch-hunt was proposed by way of variety, but no material for making good torches could be found, and the idea was abandoned. Torches should be made of dry pine knots, and carried in some shallow vessel. The common frying-pan, with a long handle, is best for the purpose. Link-torches, unless of the best pitch-pine, do not burn with sufficient brightness to stupefy the pigeons. They will flutter off before the hunter can get his long pole within reach, whereas with a very brilliant light, he may approach almost near enough to lay his hands upon them. As there were no pitch-pine trees in the neighborhood, nor any good torch-wood, we were forced to give up the idea of a night hunt.

During the night strange noises were heard by several who chanced to be awake. Some said they resembled the howling of dogs, while others compared them to the screaming of angry cats. One party said they were produced by wolves; another, that the wild cats (lynxes) made them. But there was one that differed from all the rest. It was a sort of prolonged hiss, that all except Ike believed to be the snort of the black bear. Ike, however, declared that it was not the bear, but the "sniff," as he termed it, of the "painter" (cougar). This was probable enough, considering the nature of the place. The cougar is well known to frequent the great roosts of the passenger-pigeon, and is fond of the flesh of these birds.

In the morning our camp was still surrounded by the pigeons, sweeping about among the tree-trunks, and gathering the mast as they went. A few shots were fired, not from any inclination

to continue the sport of killing them, but to lay in a fresh stock for the day's dinner. The surplus from yesterday's feast was thrown away and left by the deserted camp—a banquet for the preying creatures that would soon visit the spot.

We moved on, still surrounded by masses upon the wing. A singular incident occurred as we were passing through a sort of avenue in the forest. It was a narrow aisle, on both sides walled in by the thick foliage of the beeches. We were fairly within this hall-like passage, when it suddenly darkened at the opposite end. We saw that a cloud of pigeons had entered it, flying toward us. They were around our heads before they had noticed us. Seeing our party, they suddenly attempted to diverge from their course, but there was no other open to them, except to rise upward in a vertical direction. This they did on the instant—the clatter of their wings producing a noise like the continued roar of thunder. Some had approached so near that the men on horseback, striking with their guns, knocked several to the ground, and the Kentuckian, stretching upward his long arm actually caught one of them on the wing. In an instant they were out of sight; but at that instant two great birds appeared before us at the opening of the forest, which were at once recognized as a brace of white-headed eagles. This accounted for the rash flight of the pigeons; for the eagles had evidently been in pursuit of them, and had driven them to seek shelter under the trees. We were desirous of emptying our guns at the great birds of prey, and there was a simultaneous spurring of horses and cocking of guns; to no purpose, however. The eagles were on the alert. They had already espied us; and, uttering their maniac screams, they wheeled suddenly and disappeared over the tree-tops.

We had hardly recovered from this pleasant little bit of excitement, when the guide, Ike, who rode in the advance, was seen suddenly to jerk up, exclaiming:

"Painter! I know'd I heerd a painter."

"Where? where?" was hurriedly uttered by several voices, while all pressed forward to the guide.

"Yander!" replied Ike, pointing to a thicket of young beeches. "He's tuk to the brush; ride round, fellers. Mark, boy, round! quick!"

There was a scramble of horsemen, with excited, anxious looks and gestures. Every one had his gun cocked and ready, and in a few seconds the small copse of beeches, with their golden-yellow leaves, was inclosed by a ring of hunters. Had the cougar got away, or was he still within the thicket? Several large trees grew out of its midst. Had he taken to one? The eyes of the party were turned upward. The fierce creature was nowhere visible.

It was impossible to see into every part of the jungle from the outside, as we sat in our saddles. The game might be crouching among the grass and brambles. What was to be done? We had no dogs. How was the cougar to be started? It would be no small peril to penetrate the thicket afoot. Who was to do it?

The question was answered by Redwood, who was now seen dismounting from his horse.

"Keep your eyes about you," cried he. "I'll make the varmint show if he's thur. Look sharp, then!"

We saw Redwood enter fearlessly, leaving his horse hitched over a branch. We heard him no longer, as he proceeded with that stealthy silence known only to the Indian-fighter. We listened and waited in profound suspense. Not even the crackling of a branch broke the stillness. Full five minutes we waited, and then the sharp crack of a rifle near the center of the copsewood relieved us. The next moment was heard Redwood's voice crying aloud:

"Look out thur! I've missed him."

Before we had time to change our attitudes another rifle cracked, and another voice was heard crying, in answer to Redwood:

"But I hain't."

"He's hyur," continued the voice; "dead as mutton. Come this way an' y'u'll see the beauty."

Ike's voice was recognized, and we all galloped to the spot where it proceeded from. At his feet lay the body of the panther quite dead. There was a red spot running blood between the ribs, where Ike's bullet had penetrated. In trying to escape from the thicket, the cougar had halted a moment, in a crouching attitude, directly before Ike's face, and that moment was enough to give the trapper time to glance through his sights and send the fatal bullet.

Of course the guide received the congratulations of all, and though he pretended not to regard the thing in the light of a feat, he knew well that killing a "painter" was no every-day adventure.

The skin of the animal was stripped off in a trice and carried to the wagon. Such a trophy is rarely left in the woods.

The hunter-naturalist performed some further operations upon the body for the purpose of examining the contents of the stomach. These consisted entirely of the half-digested remains of passenger pigeons, an enormous quantity of which the beast had devoured during the

previous night, having captured them, no doubt, upon the trees.

This adventure formed a pleasant theme for conversation during the rest of our journey, and of course the cougar was the subject.

CHAPTER VI.

OLD IKE'S ADVENTURE.

Now a panther story was the natural winding-up of this day, and it had been already hinted that old Ike had "rubbed out" several of these creatures in his time, and no doubt could tell more than one "painter" story.

"Wal, strengers," began he, "it's true thet this hyur ain't the fust painter I've come'd acrost. About fifteen yeern ago I moved to Loozyanny, an' thur I met a painter, an' a queer story it are."

"Let us have it, by all means," said several of the party, drawing closer up and seating themselves to listen attentively. We all knew that a story from Ike could not be otherwise than "queer," and our curiosity was on the *qui vive*.

"Wal then," continued he, "they have floods down thur in Loozyanny, sich as, I guess, you've never seen the like o' in England." Here Ike addressed himself specially to our English comrade. "England ain't big enough to hev sich floods. One o' m' u'd kiver y'ur hul country, I hev heern said. I won't say that are true, as I ain't acquainted with y'ur jography. I know, howsomdever, they're mighty big freshets thur, as I hev sailed a skiff more'n a hundred mile across't one o' m', whur thur wan't nothin' to be seen but cypress tops peepin' out o' the water. The floods, as ye know, come every year, but them ar' big ones only oncest in a while."

"Wal, as I've said, about fifteehn yeern ago, I located in the Red River bottom, about fifty mile or tharabout below Nacketosh, whur I built me a shanty. I hed left my wife an' two young critters in Massissippi State, intendin' to go back for 'em in the spring; so ye see I wur all alone by myself, exceptin' my ole mar', a Collins's ax, an' of course, my rifle."

"I hed finished the shanty all but the chinkin' an' the buildin' o' a chimney, when what shed come on but one o' m' tarnation floods. It wur at night when it begun to make its appearance. I wur asleep on the floor o' the shanty, an' the first warnin' I hed o' it wur the feel o' the water soakin' through my ole blanket. I hed been a-dreamin', an' thort it wur rainin', an' then ag'in I thort I wur bein' drowned in the Massissippi; but I wa'n't many seconds awake, till I guessed what it wur in raality; so I jumped to my feet, like a startled buck, an' groped my way to the door."

"A sight that wur when I got thur! I hed clurred a piece o' ground around the shanty—a kuppel o' acres or better—I hed left the stumps a good three feet high; thur wa'n't a stump to be seen. My clearin', stumps an' all, wur under water; an' I could see it shinin' among the trees all round the shanty."

"Of coorse, my fust thoughts wur about my rifle; an' I turned back into the shanty, an' laid my claws upon that quick enough."

"I next went in search o' my ole mar'. She wa'n't hard to find; for if ever a critter made a noise, she did. She wur tied to a tree close by the shanty, an' the way she wur a-squealin' wur a caution to cats. I found her up to the belly in water, pitchin' an' flounderin' all round the tree. She hed nothin' on but the rope that she wur hitched by. Both saddle an' bridle hed been washed away; so I made the rope into a sort o' halter, an' mounted her bare-backed."

"Jest then I begun to think whur I wur a-goin'. The hul country appeared to be under water; an' the nearest neighbor I hed lived across't the parairy ten miles off. I knew that his shanty sot on high ground, but how wur I to get thur? It wur night; I mout lose my way, an' ride chuck into the river."

"When I thort o' this, I concluded it mout be better to stay by my own shanty till mornin'. I could hitch the mar' inside to keep her srom bein' floated away; an' for meself, I could climb on the roof."

"While I wur thinkin' on this, I noticed that the water wur a-deepenin', an' it jest kim into my head that it 'ud soon be deep enough to drown'd my ole mar'. For meself, I wa'n't frightened. I mout 'a' clomb a tree, an' stayed thur till the flood fell; but I shed 'a' lost the mar', an' that critter wur too valleyble to think of such a sacrifice; so I made up my mind to chance crossin' the parairy. Thur wa'n't no time to be wasted—ne'er a min' nit, so I g'in the mar' a kick or two in the ribs an' started."

"I found the path out to the edge of the parairy easy enough. I hed blazed it when I fust come to the place; an', as the night wur not a very dark one, I could see the blazes as I passed tween the trees. My mar' knew the track as well as meself, an' swalttered through at a sharp rate, for she knew too thur wa'n't no time to be wasted. In five minnites we kim out on the edge o' the parairy, an' jest as I expected, the hul thing wur kivered with water, an' lookin' like a big pond. I could see it shinin' clur acrost to the other side of the openin'."

"As luck 'ud hev it, I could jest git a glimpse

o' the trees on the fur side o' the parairy. Thur wur a big clump o' cypress, that I could see plain enough; I knew this wur clost to my neighbor's shanty, so I g'in my critter the switch, an' struck right fur it.

"As I left the timmer, the mar' wur up to her hips. Of coorse, I expected a good grist o' heavy wadin', but I hed no idee that the water wur a gwine to git much higher—thur's whur I made my mistake.

"I hedn't got more'n a kupple o' miles out when I diskiyered that the thing wur a-risin' rapidly, for I see'd the mar' wur a-gettin' deeper and deeper.

"Twa'n't no use turnin' back now. I 'ud lose the mar' to a dead sartinty, if I didn't make the high ground—so I spoke to the critter to do her best, an' kep' on. The poor beast didn't need any whippin'—she knew as well's I did meself thur wur danger, an' she wur a-doin' her darnedest, an' no mistake. Still the water riz, an' kep' a-rizin', until it cum clur up to her shoulders.

"I begun to git skeart in airnest. We wa'n't more 'n half acrosst, an' I see'd if it riz much more we'd hav' to swim for it. I wa'n't far astray about that. The minnit arter it seemed to deepen suddintly, as if thur wur a hollow in the parairy. I heerd the mar' give a loud gounf, an' then go down, till I war up to the waist. She riz ag'in the next minnit, but I could tell from the smooth ridin' that she wur off o' the bottom. She war swimmin', an' no mistake.

"At fust I thort o' headin' her back to the shanty, an' I drew her round with that intent; but turn her which way I would, I found she could no longer touch bottom.

"I guess, strengers, I wur in a quandaury about then. I 'gun to think that both my own an' my mar's time wur come in airnest, for I hed no idee that the critter could iver swim to the other side, 'specially with me on her back, an' purticklarly as at that time these hyur ribs had a sight more griskin upon 'em than they hev now.

"Wal, I wur about reckonin' up. I hed got to thinkin' o' Mary an' the childer, an' the old shanty in the Massissipi, an' a heap o' things that I hed left unsettled, an' that now come into my mind to trouble me. The mar' wur still plunjin' ahead, but I see'd she wur sinkin' deeper an' deeper an' fast losin' her strength, an' I knew she couldn't hold out much longer.

"I thort at this time that if I got off o' her back an' tuk hold o' the tail, she mout manage a leetle better. So I slipped backward over her hips an' grupp'd the long hair. It did do some good, for she swum higher; but we got mighty slow through the water, an' I hed but leetle hopes we should reach land.

"I wur towed in this way about a quarter o' a mile, when I spied somethin' floatin' on the water a leetle ahead. It hed growed considerably darker, but thur wur still light enough to show me that the thing wur a log.

"An idee now entered my brain-pan that I mout save meself by takin' to the log. The mar' 'd then have a better chance for herself; an' maybe, when eased o' draggin' my carcass, that wur a-keepin' her back, she mout make footin' somewhur. So I waited till she got a leetle closter; an' then, lettin' go o' her tail, I clasped the log an' crawled onto it.

"The mar' swum on, apperintly 'ithout missin' me. I see'd her disappear through the darkness; but I didn't as much as say good-by to her, for I wur afeard that my voice mout bring her back ag'in, an' she mout strike the log with her hoofs, an' whammel it about. So I lay quiet, an' let her hev her own way.

"I wa'n't long on the log till I see'd it wur a-driftin', for thur wur a current in the water that set toluble sharp acrosst the parairy. I hed crawled up at one eend, an' got stridelegs, but as the log dipped considerable I wur still over the hams in the water.

"I thort I mout be more comfortable toward the middle, an' wur about to pull the thing more under me, when all at once I see'd thur wur somethin' clumped up on t'other eend o' the log.

"Twa'n't very clur at the time, for it had been a-growin' cloudier ever since I left the shanty, but 'twur clur enough to show me that the thing wur a varmint; what sort I couldn't tell. It mout be a b'ar, an' it mout not; but I had my suspects it wur eyther a b'ar or a painter.

"I wan't left long in doubt about the thing's gender. The log kep makin' circles as it drifted, an' when the varmint kim round into a different light I caught a glimp o' its eyes. I knew them eyes to be no b'ar's eyes—they wur painter's eyes, an' no mistake.

"I reckon, strengers, I felt very queery jest about then. I didn't try to go any nearer the middle o' the log, but instead o' that, I wriggled back until I wur right plum on the eend of it, an' could git no further.

"Thur I sot for a good long spell 'ithout movin' hand or foot. I dasen't make a motion, as I wur afeard it mout tempt the varmint to attackt me.

"I hed no weepun but my knife; I hed let go o' my rifle when I slid from the mar's back, an' it hed gone to the bottom long since. I wa'n't in any condition to stand a tussle with the painter

nohow; so I wur detarmined to let him alone as long's he 'ud me.

"Wal, we drifted on for a good hour, I guess, 'ithout eyther o' us stirrin'. We sot face to face; an' now an' then the current 'ud set the log in a sort o' up-an'-down motion, an' then the painter an' I kep' bowin' to each other like a pair o' bob-sawyers. I could see all the while that the varmint's eyes wur fixed upon mine, an' I never tuk mine from his'n; I know'd 'twar the only way to keep him still.

"I wur jest prospectin' what 'ud be the eendin' o' the business, when I see'd we wur a-gettin' closter to the timmer; 'twa'n't more 'n two miles off, but 'twur all under water 'ceptin' the tops o' the trees. I wur thinkin' that when the log shed float in among the branches, I mout slip off, an' git my claws upon a tree, 'ithout sayin' anythin' to my travelin'-companion.

"Jest at that minnit, somethin' appeared dead ahead o' the log. It wur like a island; but what could hev brought a island thur? Then I recollects that I hed see'd a piece o' high ground about that part o' the parairy—a sort o' mound that hed been made by Injuns, I s'pose. This, then, that looked like a island, wur the top o' that mound, sure enough.

"The log wur a-driftin' in sich a way, that I see'd it must pass within twenty yards o' the mound. I detarmined then, as soon as we shed git alongside, to put out for it, an' leave the painter to continue his voyage 'ithout me.

"When I fust sighted the island, I see'd somethin' that I hed tuk for bushes. But thur wa'n't no bushes on the mound—that I know'd.

"Howsomdever, when we got a leetle closter, I diskiyered that the bushes wur beasts. They wur deer; for I spied a pair o' buck's horns atween me an' the sky. But thur wur a somethin' still bigger than a deer. It mout be a hoss, or it mout be an Opelousa ox, but I thort it wur a hoss.

"I wur right about that, for a horse it wur, sure enough, or rayther I shed say, a mar', an' that mar' no other than my ole crittur!

"Arter partin' company, she had turned with the current; an', as good-luck 'ud hev it, hed swum in a bee-line for the island, an' thur she stood lookin' as slick as if she hed been greased.

"The log hed by this got nigh enough, as I kalklated; an' with as little rumpus as possible, I slipped over the eend an' lot go my hold o' it. I wa'n't right spread in the water, afore I heerd a plump, an' lookin' round a bit, I see'd the painter hed left the log too, an' tuk to the water.

"At fust, I thort he wur arter me; an' I drew my knife with one hand, while I swum with the other. But the painter didn't mean fight that time. He made but poor swimmin' himself, an' appeared glad enough to get upon dry groun' 'ithout molestin' me; so we swum on side by side, an' not a word passed atween us.

"I didn't want to make a race o' it; so I let him pass me, rayther than that he should fall behind, an' get among my legs.

"Of coorse, he landed fust; an' I could hear by the stompin' o' hoofs, that his suddint appearance hed kicked up a jolly stampede among the critters upon the island. I could see both deer an' mar' dancin' all over the groun', as if Old Nick himself hed got among 'em.

"None o' 'em, howsomdever, thort o' takin' to the water. They hed all hed enough o' thet, I guess.

"I kep' a leetle round, so as not to land near the painter; an' then, touchin' bottom, I climbed quietly up on the mound. I hed hardly drawn my drippin' carcass out o' the water, when I heerd a loud squeal, which I knew to be the whigher o' my ole mar'; an' jest at that minnit the critter kim runnin' up, an' rubbed her nose ag'in my shoulder. I tuk the halter in my hand, an' sidlin' round a leetle, I jumped upon her back, for I still wur in fear o' the painter; an' the mar's back appeared to me the safest place about, an' that wa'n't very safe, eyther.

"I now looked all round to see what new company I hed got into. The day wur jest breakin', an' I could distinguish a leetle better every minnit. The top o' the mound which wur above water, wa'n't over half an acre in size, an' wur as clur o' timmer as any other part o' the parairy, so that I could see every inch o' it, an' everythin' on it as big as a tumble-bug.

"I reckon, strengers, that you'll hardly believe me when I tell you the concatenation o' varmints that wur then an' thur caucused together. I could hardly believe my own eyes when I see'd sich a gatherin', an' I thort I hed got aboard o' Noah's Ark. Thur wur—listen, strengers—fust my ole mar' an' meself, an' I wished both o' us anywhur else, I reckon—then thur wur the painter, yur old acquaintance—then thur wur four deer; a buck an' three does. Then kim a catamount; an' arter him a black b'ar, a'most as big as a buffalo. Then thur wur a 'coon an' a 'possum, an' a kupple o' gray wolves, an' a swamp rabbit, an', darn the thing! a stinkin' skunk. Perhaps the last wa'n't the most dangerous varmint on the groun', but it sartinly wur the most disagreeablest o' the hul lot, for it smelt only as a cussed polecat kin smell.

"I've said, strengers, that I wur mightily tuk by surprise when I fust see'd this curious clan-

jamfrey o' critters; but I kin tell you I wur more dumfounded when I see'd thur behaveyur to one another, knowin' thur different natur's as I did. Thur wur the painter lyin' clost up to the deer—its nat'ral prey; an' thur wur the wolves too; an' thur wur the catamount standin' within three feet o' the 'possum an' the swamp rabbit; an' thur wur the b'ar an' the cunnin' old 'coon; an' thur they all wur, no more mindin' one another than if they hed spent all thur days together in the same penn.

"'Twur the oddest sight I ever see'd an' it remembered me o' bit o' Scriptor my ole mother hed often read from a book called the Bible, or some sich name—about a lion that wur so tame he used to squat down beside a lamb, 'ithout layin' a claw upon the innocent critter.

"Wal, strengers, as I'm sayin', the hul party behaved in this very way. They all appeared down in the mouth, an' badly skeart about the water; but for all that, I hed my fears that the painter or the b'ar—I wa'n't afeard o' any o' the others—mout git over thur fright afore the flood fell; an' thurfore I kept as quiet as any one o' them during the hul time I wur in thur company, an' stayin' all the time clost by the mar'. But neyther b'ar nor painter showed any savage sign the hul o' the next day, nor the night that folloed it.

"Strengers, it 'ud tire you wur I to tell you all the movements that tuk place among these critters durin' that long day an' night. Ne'er a one o' 'em laid tooth or claw on the other. I wur hungry enough meself, and 'ud a' liked to hev taken a steak from the buttocks o' one o' the deer, but I dasen't do it. I wur afeard to break the peace, which mout a' led to a general shindy.

"When day broke, next mornin' arter, I see'd that the flood wur a-fallin'; and as soon as it wur shallow enough, I led my mar' quietly into the water, an' climbin' upon her back, tuk a silent leave o' my companions. The water still tuk my mar' up to the flanks, so that I knew none o' the varmint could follow 'ithout swimmin', an' ne'er a one seemed inclined to try a swim.

"I struck direct for my neighbor's shanty, which I could see about three mile off, an', in a hour or so, I wur at his door. Thur I didn't stay long, but borrowin' an' extra gun which he happened to hev, an' takin' him along with his own rifle, I waded my mar' back to the island.

"We found the 'game not exactly as I hed left it. The fall o' the flood hed given the painter, the cat, an' the wolves courage. The swamp-rabbit an' the 'possum wur clean gone—all but bits o' thur wool—an' one o' the does wur better'n half devoured.

"My neighbor tuk one side an' I the other, an' ridin' clost up, we surrounded the island.

"I plugged the painter at the fust shot, an' he did the same for the b'ar. We next layed out the wolves, an' arter that cooney, an' then we tuk our time about the deer—these last and the b'ar bein' the oniy valley'ble things on the island. The skunk we kilt last, as we didn't want the thing to stink us off the place while we wur a-skinnin' the deer.

"Arter killin' the skunk, we mounted an' left, of coorse loaded with our b'ar-meat an' venison.

"I got my rifle arter all. When the flood went down, I found it near the middle of the parairy, half-buried in the sludge.

"I saw I hed built my shanty in the wrong place; but I soon looked out a better location, an' put up another. I hed all ready in the spring, when I went back to Massissipi an' brought out Mary and the two young 'uns."

The singular adventure of old Ike illustrates a point in nat'ral history that, as soon as the trapper had ended, became the subject of conversation. It was that singular trait in the character of predatory animals, as the cougar, when under circumstances of danger. On such occasions fear seems to influence them so much as to completely subdue their ferocity, and they will not molest other animals sharing the common danger, even when the latter are their natural and habitual prey. Nearly every one of us had observed this at some time or other; and the old naturalist, as well as the hunter-guides, related many incidents confirming the strange fact. Humboldt speaks of an instance observed by him on the Orinoco, where the fierce jaguar and some other creatures were seen quietly and peacefully floating together on the same log—all more or less frightened at their situation!

Ike's story had very much interested the doctor, who rewarded him with a "nip" from the pewter flask; and, indeed, on this occasion the flask was passed round, as the day had been one of unusual interest. The killing of a cougar is a rare adventure, even in the wildest haunts of the backwoods country.

CHAPTER VII.

MOSQUITOES AND THEIR ANTIDOTE.

OUR next day's journey brought us into heavy timber—another creek bottom. The soil was rich and loamy, and the road we traveled was moist, and in some places very heavy for our wagon. Several times the latter got stalled

in the mud, and then the whole party were obliged to dismount and put their shoulders to the wheel. Our progress was marked by some noise and confusion, and the constant din made by Jake talking to his team, his loud, sonorous "whoa!" as they were obliged to halt, and the lively "gee up—gee up" as they moved on again—frighted any game long before we could come up with it. Of course we were compelled to keep by the wagon until we had made the passage of the miry flat.

We were dreadfully annoyed by the mosquitoes, particularly the doctor, of whose blood they seemed to be especially fond! This is a curious fact in relation to the mosquitoes—of two persons sleeping in the same apartment, one will sometimes be bitten, or rather punctured, and half-bled to death, while the other remains untouched! Is it the quality of the blood or the thickness of the skin that guides to this preference?

This point was discussed among us—the doctor taking the view that it was always a sign of good blood when one was more than usually subject to the attack of mosquitoes. He was himself an apt illustration of the fact. This statement, of course, produced a general laugh, and some remarks at the doctor's expense, on the part of the opponents of his theory. Strange to say, old Ike was fiercely assailed by the little blood suckers. This seemed to be an argument against the doctor's theory, for in the tough, skinny carcass of the old trapper the blood could neither have been very plentiful nor delicate.

Most of us smoked as we rode along, hoping by that means to drive off the ferocious swarm, but, although tobacco smoke is disagreeable to the mosquitoes, they cannot be wholly got rid of by a pipe or cigar. Could one keep a constant *nimbus* of the smoke around his face it might be effective, but not otherwise. A sufficient quantity of tobacco smoke will kill mosquitoes outright, as I have more than once proved by a thorough fumigation of my sleeping apartment.

These insects are not peculiar, as sometimes supposed, to the inter-tropical regions of America. They are found in great numbers even to the shores of the Arctic Sea, and as fierce and bloodthirsty as anywhere else—of course only in the summer season, when as before remarked, the thermometer in these northern latitudes mounts to a high figure. Their haunts are the banks of rivers, and particularly those of a stagnant and muddy character.

There is another singular fact in regard to them. Upon the banks of some of the South American rivers, life is almost unendurable on account of this pest—the "*plaga de mosquitos*," as the Spaniards term it—while upon other streams in the very same latitude mosquitoes are unknown. These streams are what are termed "*rios negros*," or black-water rivers—a peculiar class of rivers, to which many tributaries of the Amazon and Orinoco belong.

Our English comrade, who had traveled all over South America, gave us this information as we rode along. He stated that he had often considered it a great relief, a sort of escape from purgatory, while on his travels he parted from one of the yellow or white water streams, to enter one of the "*rios negros*." Many Indian tribes settled upon the banks of the latter solely to get clear of the "*plaga de mosquitos*." The Indians who reside in the mosquito districts habitually paint their bodies and smear themselves with oil, as a protection against their bites; and it is a common thing among the natives, when speaking of any place, to inquire into the "character" of its mosquitoes.

On some tributaries of the the Amazon the mosquitoes are really a life torment, and the wretched creatures who inhabit such places frequently bury their bodies in the sand in order to get sleep. Even the pigments with which they anoint themselves are pierced by the poisoned bills of their tormentors.

Besancon and the Kentuckian both denied that any species of ointment would serve as a protection against mosquitoes. The doctor joined them in their denial. They asserted that they had tried everything that could be thought of—camphor, ether, hartshorn, spirits of turpentine, etc.

Some of us were of a different opinion, and Ike settled the point soon after in favor of the dissentients by a practical illustration. The old trapper, as before stated, was a victim to the fiercest attacks, as was manifest by the slapping which he repeatedly administered to his cheeks, and an almost constant muttering of bitter imprecations. He knew a remedy he said in a "sartint weed," if he could only "lay his claws upon it." We noticed that from time to time as he rode along his eyes swept the ground in every direction. At length a joyous exclamation told that he had discovered the "weed."

"Thur's the darned thing at last," muttered he, as he flung himself to the ground, and commenced gathering the stalks of a small herb that grew plentifully about. It was an annual, with leaves very much of the size and shape of young garden box-wood, but of a much brighter green. Of course we all knew well enough

what it was, for there is not a village common in the Western States that is not covered with it. It was the well known pennyroyal.

Redwood also leaped from his horse, and set to plucking the weed. He, too, from experience, knew its virtues.

We all drew bridle, watching the guides. Both operated in a similar manner. Having collected a handful of the tenderest tops, they rubbed them violently between their palms—rough and good for such service—and then passed the latter over the exposed skin of their necks and faces. Ike took two small bunches of the stalks, crushed them under his heel, and then stuck them beneath his cap, so that the ends hung down over his cheeks. This being done, he and his comrade mounted their horses and rode on.

Some of us—the hunter-naturalist, the Englishman and myself—dismounted and imitated Ike—of course under a volley of laughter and "pooh-poohs" from Besancon, the Kentuckian, and the doctor; but we had not ridden two hundred paces until the joke changed sides. From that moment not a mosquito approached us, while our three friends were bitten as badly as ever.

In the end they were convinced, and the torment of the mosquitoes proving stronger than the fear of our ridicule, all three sprung out of their saddles, and made a rush at the next bed of pennyroyal that came in sight.

Whether it is the highly aromatic odor of the pennyroyal that keeps off these insects, or whether the juice when touched by them burns the delicate nerves of their feet I am unable to say. Certain it is they will not alight upon the skin which has been plentifully anointed with it. I have tried the same experiment often since that time with a similar result, and in fact have never since traveled through a mosquito country without a provision of the "essence of pennyroyal." This is better than the herb itself, and can be obtained from any apothecary. A single drop or two spilled in the palm of the hand is sufficient to rub over all the parts exposed, and will often insure sleep, where otherwise such a thing would be impossible. I have often lain with my face so smeared, and listened to the sharp hum of the mosquito as it approached, fancying that the next moment I should feel its tiny touch, as it settled down upon my cheek, or brow. As soon, however, as it came within the influence of the pennyroyal I could hear it suddenly tack round and wing its way off again, until its disagreeable "music" was no longer heard.

The only drawback in the use of the pennyroyal lies in the burning sensation which the fluid produces upon the skin; and this in a climate where the thermometer is pointing to 90° is no slight disqualification of the remedy. The use of it is sometimes little better than "Hobson's choice."

The application of it on the occasion mentioned restored the spirits of our party, which had been somewhat kept under by the continuous attacks of the mosquitoes, and a lively little incident that occurred soon after, viz., the hunt and capture of a raccoon, made us all quite merry.

Cooney, though a night prowler, is sometimes abroad during the day, but especially in situations where the timber is high, and the woods dark and gloomy. On the march we had come so suddenly upon this one, that he had not time to strike out for his own tree, where he would soon have hidden from us in its deep cavity. He had been too busy with his own affairs—the nest of a wild turkey upon the ground, under some brush and leaves, the broken eggs in which told of the delicious meal he had made. Taken by surprise—for the guides had ridden nearly on top of him—he galloped up the nearest tree, which fortunately contained neither fork nor cavity in which he could shelter himself; and a well directed shot from Redwood's rifle brought him with a heavy "thump" back to the ground again.

We were all stirred up a little by this incident; in fact, the unusual absence of game rendered ever so trifling an occurrence an "event" with us. No one, however, was so pleased as the black wagoner Jake, whose eyes fairly danced in his head at the sight of a "coon." The "coon" to Jake was well-known game—natural and legitimate—and Jake preferred "roast coon" to fried bacon at any time. Jake knew that none of us would care to eat of his coonship. He was therefore sure of his supper; and the "varmint" was carefully deposited in the corner of the wagon.

Jake did not have it all to himself. The trappers liked fresh meat too, even "coon-meat," and of course claimed their share. None of the rest of the party had any relish for such a fox-like carcass.

After supper, cooney was honored with a description, and for many of the facts of his history we are indebted to Jake himself.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE COON AND HIS HABITS.

FOREMOST of all the wild creatures of America in point of being generally known is the raccoon. None has a wider geographical distribu-

tion, as its "range" embraces the entire continent, from the Polar Sea to Terra del Fuego.

In most parts where the Spanish language is spoken, it is known as the "*zorro negro*," or black fox. Indeed, there are two species in South America, the common one, and the crab-eater.

In North America it is one of the most common of wild animals. In all parts you may meet with it. In the hot lowlands of Louisiana—in the tropical "chaparrals" of Mexico—in the snowy regions of Canada—and in the vernal valleys of California. Unlike the deer, the wild cat, and the wolverene, it is never mistaken for any other animal, nor is any animal taken for it.

Although there is a variety in color and size, there is no ambiguity about species or genus. Wherever the English language is spoken, it has but one name, the "raccoon." In America, every man, woman and child knows the "sly ole 'coon."

This animal has been placed by naturalists in the bear family. It has, in our opinion, but little in common with the bear, and far more resembles the fox. Hence the Spanish name of "*zorro negro*" (black fox).

There is a fact connected with the sex of this creature which is curious; the female is larger than the male. Not only larger, but in every respect a finer-looking animal. The hair, long on both, is more full and glossy upon the female, its tints deeper and more beautiful. This is contrary to the general order of nature. By those unacquainted with this fact the female is mistaken for the male, and *vice versa*, as in the case of hawks and eagles.

The raccoon is a tree-climber of the first quality. It climbs with its sharp-curved claws, not by hugging, as is the case with the bear tribe. Its lair, or place of retreat, is in a tree—some hollow, with its entrance high up. Such trees are common in the great primeval forests of America. In this tree-cave it has its nest, where the female brings forth three, four, five or six "cubs" at a birth. This takes place in early spring—usually the first week in April.

The raccoon is a creature of the woods. On the prairies and in treeless regions it is not known. It prefers heavy "timber," where there are huge logs and hollow trees in plenty. It requires the neighborhood of water, and in connection with this may be mentioned a curious habit it has, that of plunging all its food into the water before devouring it. It may be remembered that the otter has a similar habit. It is from this peculiarity that the raccoon derives its specific name of *Lotor* (washer). It does not always moisten its morsel thus, but pretty generally. It is fond, moreover, of frequent ablutions, and no animal is more clean or tidy in its habits.

The raccoon is almost omnivorous. It eats poultry or wild fowls. It devours frogs, lizards, larvæ, and insects without distinction. It is fond of sweets, and is very destructive to the sugar-cane and Indian corn of the planter. When the ear of the maize is young, or, as it is termed, "in the milk," it is very sweet. Then the raccoon loves to prey upon it. Whole troops at night visit the cornfields and commit extensive havoc. These mischievous habits make the creature many enemies, and in fact it has but few friends. It kills hares, rabbits, and squirrels when it can catch them, and will rob a bird's nest in the most ruthless manner. It is particularly fond of shell-fish; and the *unios*, with which many of the fresh-water lakes and rivers of America abound, form part of its food. These it opens as adroitly with its claws as an oysterman could with his knife. It is partial to the "soft-shell" crabs and small tortoises common in the American waters.

Jake told us of a trick which the 'coon puts in practice for catching the small turtles of the creek. We were not inclined to give credence to the story, but Jake almost swore to it. It is certainly curious if true, but it smacks very much of Buffon. It may be remarked, however, that the knowledge which the plantation negroes have of the habits of the raccoon surpasses that of any mere naturalist. Jake boldly declares that the 'coon fishes for turtles! that it squats upon the bank of the stream, allowing its bushy tail to hang over into the water; that the turtle swimming about in search of food or amusement, spies the hairy appendage and lays hold of it; and that the 'coon, feeling the nibble, suddenly draws the testaceous swimmer upon dry land, and then "cleans out de shell" at his leisure!

The 'coon is often domesticated. It is harmless as a dog or cat except when crossed by children, when it will snarl, snap and bite like the most crabbed cur. It is troublesome, however, where poultry is kept, and this prevents its being much of a favorite. Indeed, it is not one, for it is hunted everywhere, and killed—wherever this can be done—on sight.

There is a curious connection between the negro and the raccoon. It is not a tie of sympathy, but a link of antagonism. The 'coon, as already observed, is the negro's legitimate game. 'Coon-hunting is peculiarly a negro sport. The negro is the 'coon's mortal enemy. He kills the 'coon when and wherever he can, and eats it too. He loves its "meat," which is

pork-tasted, and in young 'coons palatable enough, but in old ones rather rank.

From both 'coon and 'possum does the poor negro derive infinite sport—many a sweet excitement that cheers his long winter nights, and checkers with brighter spots the monotony of his life.

CHAPTER IX.

WILD HOGS OF THE WOODS.

NEXT day while threading our way through a patch of oak forest—the ground covered thickly with fallen leaves—we were startled by a peculiar noise in front of us. It was a kind of bellows-like snort, exactly like that made by the domestic swine when suddenly affrighted.

Some of the party cried out "bear," and of course this announcement threw us all into a high state of excitement. Even the buffalo itself would be but secondary game, when a bear was upon the ground.

The "snuff" of the bear has a very considerable resemblance to that of terrified hogs, and even our guides were deceived. They thought it might be "bar" we had heard.

It proved we were all wrong. No wonder we fancied the noise resembled that made by hogs. The animal that uttered it was nothing else than a wild boar.

"What!" you will exclaim, "a wild boar in the forests of Missouri? Oh! a peccary I suppose."

No, not a peccary; for these creatures do not range so far north as the latitude of Missouri—not a wild boar, either, if you restrict the meaning of the phrase to the true indigenous animal of that kind. For all that, it was a wild boar, or rather a boar *run wild*. Wild enough and savage too it appeared, although we had only a glimpse of its shaggy form as it dashed into the thicket with a loud grunt. Half a dozen shots followed it. No doubt it was tickled with some of the "lead hail" from the double-barreled guns, but it contrived to escape, leaving us only the incident as a subject for conversation.

Throughout the backwoods there are large numbers of half-wild hogs, but they are usually the denizens of woods that are inclosed by a rail fence, and therefore private property. One part of the year they are tamer, when a scarcity of food renders it necessary for them to approach the owner's house, and eat the corn placed for them in a well-known spot. At this season they answer to a call somewhat similar to the "milk oh!" of the London dairyman, but loud enough to be heard a mile or more through the woods. A traveler passing through the backwoods settlements will often hear this singular call sounding afar off in the stillness of the evening.

These hogs pick up most of their subsistence in the forest. The "mast" of the beech-tree, the nut of the hickory, the fruit of the Chinquapin oak, the acorn, and many other seeds and berries, furnish them with food. Many roots besides, and grasses, contribute to sustain them; and they make an occasional meal off a snake whenever they can get hold of one. Indeed it may be safely asserted, that no other cause has contributed so much to the destruction of these reptiles, as the introduction of the domestic hog into the forests of America. Wherever a tract of woods has been used as the "run" of a drove of hogs, serpents of every kind become exceedingly scarce, and you may hunt through such a tract for weeks without seeing one. The hog seems to have the strongest antipathy to the snake tribe; without the least fear of them. When one of the latter is discovered by a hog, and no crevice in the rocks, or hollow log, offers it a shelter, its destruction is inevitable. The hog rushes to the spot, and bounding forward, crushes the reptile under his hoofs. Should the first attempt not succeed, and the serpent glide away, the hog nimbly follows, and repeats his efforts until the victim lies helpless. The victor then goes to work with his powerful jaws, and quietly devours the prey.

The fondness of the hog for this species of food proves that in a state of nature it is partially a carnivorous animal. The peccary, which is the true representative of the wild hog in America—has the very same habit, and is well known to be one of the most fatal enemies of the serpent tribe to be found among American animals.

The hog shows no fear of the snake. His thick hide seems to protect him. The "skin" of the rattlesnake or the "hiss" of the deadly "moccasin," are alike unheeded by him. He kills them as easily as he does the innocent "chicken snake" or the black constrictor. The latter often escapes from its dreaded enemy by taking to a bush or tree; but the rattlesnake and the moccasin are not tree-climbers, and either hide themselves in the herbage and dead leaves, or retreat to their holes.

It is not true that the hog eats the body of the snake he has killed, leaving the head untouched, and thus avoiding the poisoned fangs. He devours the whole of the creature, head and all. The venom of the snake, like the "curari" poi-

son of the South American Indians, is only effective when coming in contact with the blood. Taken internally its effects are innoxious—indeed there are those who believe it to be beneficial, and the curari is often swallowed as a medicine.

Most of this information about the half-wild hogs of the backwoods was given by our Kentucky comrade, who himself was the proprietor of many hundreds of them. An annual hog-hunt was part of the routine of his life. It was undertaken not merely for the sport of the thing—though that was by no means to be despised—and the season of hog-hunting is looked forward to with pleasant anticipation by the domestics of the plantation, as well as a few select friends or neighbors who are invited to participate in it.

When the time arrives, the proprietor, with his pack of hounds, and accompanied by a party mounted and armed with rifles, enters the large tract of woodland—perhaps miles in extent and in many places covered with canebrakes, and almost impenetrable thickets of undergrowth. To such places the hogs fly for shelter, but the dogs can penetrate wherever hogs can go; and of course the latter are soon driven out and forced into more open ground, where the mounted men are waiting to receive them with a volley of bullets. Sometimes a keen pursuit follows, and the dogs in full cry are carried across the country, over huge logs, and through thickets and ravines, followed by the horsemen—just as if an old fox was the game pursued.

A large wagon with drivers and attendants follows the chase, and in this the killed are deposited, to be "hauled" home when the hunt is over.

This, however, often continues for several days, until all, or at least all the larger hogs, are collected and brought home, and then the sport terminates. The produce of the hunt sometimes amounts to hundreds—according to the wealth of the proprietor. Of course a scene of slaughtering and bacon-curing follows. A part of the bacon furnishes the "smoke-house" for home consumption during the winter; while the larger part finds its way to the great pork-market of Cincinnati.

The Kentuckian related to us a curious incident illustrating the instinct of the swinish quadruped; but which to his mind, as well as to ours, seemed more like a proof of a rational principle possessed by the animal. The incident he had himself been witness to, and in his own woodlands. He related it thus:

"I had strayed into the woods in search of a wild turkey with nothing but my shot-gun; and having tramped about a good bit, I sat down upon a log to rest myself. I had not been seated five minutes when I heard a rustling among the dead leaves in front of me. I thought it might be a deer, and raised my gun; but I was greatly disappointed on seeing some half-dozen of my own hogs make their appearance, rooting as they went along.

"I paid no more heed to them at the time; but a few minutes after my attention was again drawn to them, by seeing them make a sudden rush across a piece of open ground, as if they were in pursuit of something.

"Sure enough they were. Just before their snouts, I espied the long, shining body of a black snake, doing its best to get out of their way. In this it succeeded, for the next moment I saw it twisting itself up a pawpaw sapling, until it had reached the top branches, where it remained looking down at its pursuers.

"The snake may have fancied itself secure at the moment, and so thought I, at least so far as the hogs were concerned. I had made up my mind to be its destroyer myself, and was just about to sprinkle it with shot, when a movement on the part of one of the hogs caused me to hold back and remain quiet. I need not tell you I was considerably astonished to see the foremost of these animals seize the sapling in its jaws and jerk it about in a determined manner, as if with the intention of shaking off the snake! Of course it did not succeed in this, for the latter was wound around the branches, and it would have been as easy to have shaken off the bark.

"As you all know, gentlemen, the pawpaw is one of the softest and most brittle of our trees, and the hog seemed to have discovered this, for he suddenly changed his tactics, and instead of shaking at the sapling, commenced grinding it between his powerful jaws. The others assisted him, and the tree fell in a few seconds. As soon as the top branches touched the ground, the whole drove dashed forward at the snake; and in less than the time I take in telling it, the creature was crushed and devoured."

After hearing the singular tale, our conversation now returned to the hog we had just "jumped." All agreed that it must be some stray from the plantations that had wandered thus far from the haunts of men, for there was no settlement within twenty miles of where we then were.

Our trapper guides stated that wild hogs are frequently found in remote parts, and that many of them are not "strays," but have been "littered" and brought up in the forest. These are as shy and difficult to approach as deer, or

any other hunted animals. They are generally of a small breed, and it is supposed that they are identical with the species found throughout Mexico, and introduced by the Spaniards.

CHAPTER X.

TREED BY PECCARIES.

TALKING of these Spanish hogs naturally led us to the subject of the peccary—for this creature is an inhabitant only of those parts of North America which have been hitherto in possession of the Spanish race. Of the peccary there are two distinct species known—the "collared," and the "white-lipped." In form and habits they are very similar to each other. In size and color they differ. The "white-lipped" is the larger. Its color is dark brown, nearly black, while that of the collared peccary is a uniform iron-gray, with the exception of the band or collar upon its shoulders.

The distinctive markings are, on the former species a grayish-white patch along the jaws, and on the other a yellowish-white belt embracing the neck and shoulders, as a collar does a horse. These markings have given to each its specific name. They are further distinguished, by the forehead of the white-lipped peccary being more hollowed or concave than that of its congener.

In most other respects these creatures are alike. Both feed upon roots, fruits, frogs, toads, lizards, and snakes. Both make their lair in hollow logs, or in caves among the rocks, and both are gregarious in their habits. In this last habit, however, they exhibit some difference. The white-lipped species associate in troops to the number of hundreds, and even as many as a thousand have been seen together; whereas the others do not live in such large droves, but are oftener met with in pairs. Yet this difference of habit may arise from the fact that in the places where both have been observed, the latter have not been so plentiful as the white-lipped species. As many as a hundred of the collared peccary have been observed in one "gang," and no doubt had there been more of them in the neighborhood, the flock would have been still larger.

The white-lipped species does not extend to the northern half of the American Continent. Its *habitat* is in the great tropical forests of Guiana and Brazil, and it is found much further south, being common in Paraguay. It is there known as the "vaquira," whence our word "peccary." The other species is also found in South America, and is distinguished as the "vaquira de collar" (collared peccary). Of course, they both have trivial Indian names, differing in different parts of the country. The former is called in Paraguay "Tagnicati," while the latter is the "Taytetou."

Neither species is so numerous as they were in former times. They have been thinned off by hunting—not for the value of their flesh or their skins, not for the mere sport either, but on account of their destructive habits. In the neighborhood of settlements they make frequent forays into the maize and mandioc fields, and they will lay waste a plantation of sugarcane in a single night. For this reason it is that a war of extermination has long been waged against them by the planters and their dependents.

As already stated, it is believed that the white-lipped species is not found in North America. Probably it does exist in the forests of Southern Mexico. The natural history of these countries is yet to be thoroughly investigated. The Mexicans have unfortunately employed all their time in making revolutions. But a new period has arrived. The Panama railroad, the Nicaragua canal, and the route of Tehuantepec, will soon be open, when among the foremost who traverse these hitherto unfrequented regions, will be found troops of naturalists of the Audubon school, who will explore every nook and corner of Central America. Indeed, already some progress has been made in this respect.

The two species of peccaries, although so much alike, never associate together, and do not seem to have any knowledge of a relationship existing between them. Indeed, what is very singular, they are never found in the same tract of woods. A district frequented by the one is always without the other.

The collared peccary is the species found in North America; and of it we more particularly speak. It is met with when you approach the more southern latitudes westward of the Mississippi River. In that great wing of the continent, to the eastward of this river, and now occupied by the United States, no such animal exists, nor is there any proof that it was ever known to exist there in its wild state. In the territory of Texas, it is a common animal, and its range extends westward to the Pacific, and south throughout the remainder of the continent.

As you proceed westward, the line of its range rises considerably; and in New Mexico it is met with as high as the 33rd parallel. This is just following the isothermal line, and proves that the peccary cannot endure the rigors of a severe winter climate. It is a production of the tropics and the countries adjacent.

Some naturalists assert that it is a forest-dwelling animal, and is never seen in open countries. Others, as Buffon, state that it makes its *habitat* in the mountains, never the low countries and plains; while still others have declared that it is never found in the mountains!

None of these "theories" appears to be the correct one. It is well known to frequent the forest-covered plains of Texas, and Emory (one of the most talented of modern observers), reports having met with a large drove of peccaries in the almost treeless mountains of New Mexico. The fact is, the peccary is a wide "ranger," and frequents either plains or mountains wherever he can find the roots or fruits which constitute his natural food. The haunts he likes best appear to be the dry hilly woods, where he finds several species of nuts to his taste—such as the chinquapin (*Castanea pumila*) the pecan (*Juglans oliviformis*), and the acorns of several species of oak, with which the half-prairie country of western Texas abounds.

Farther than to eat their fruit, the forest trees are of no use to the peccary. He is not a climber, as he is a hoofed animal. But in the absence of rocks, or crevices in the cliffs, he makes his lair in the bottoms of hollow trees or in the great cavities so common in half-decayed logs. He prefers, however, a habitation among rocks, as experience has, no doubt, taught him that it is a safer retreat both from hunters and fire.

The peccary is easily distinguished from the other forest animals by his rounded, hog-like form, and long, sharp snout. Although pig-shaped, he is extremely active and light in his movements. The absence of a tail—for that member is represented only by a very small protuberance or "knob"—imparts a character of lightness to his body. His jaws are those of the hog, and a single pair of tusks, protruding near the angles of the mouth, gives him a fierce and dangerous aspect. These tusks are seen in the old males or "boars." The ears are short, and almost buried in the long harsh hairs or bristles that cover the whole body, but which are much longer on the back. These, when erected or thrown forward—as is the case when the peccary is incensed—have the appearance of a stiff mane rising all along the neck, shoulders and spine. At such times, indeed, the rigid, bristling coat over the whole body gives somewhat of a porcupine appearance to the animal.

The peccary, as already stated, is gregarious. They wander in droves of twenty, or sometimes more. This, however, is only in the winter. In the season of love, and during the period of gestation, they are met with only in pairs—a male and female. They are very true to each other, and keep close together.

The female produces two young at a litter. These are of a reddish-brown color, and at first not larger than young puppies; but they are soon able to follow the mother through the woods, and then the "family party" usually consists of four.

Later in the season, several of these families unite and remain together, partly, perhaps, from having met by accident, and partly for mutual protection; for whenever one of their number is attacked, all the drove takes part against the assailant, whether he be hunter, cougar, or lynx. As they use both their teeth, tusks, and sharp fore-hoofs with rapidity and effect, they become a formidable and dangerous enemy.

The cougar is often killed and torn to pieces by a drove of peccaries, that he has been imprudent enough to attack. Indeed, this fierce creature will not often meddle with the peccaries when he sees them in large numbers. He attacks only single ones; but their "grunting," which can be heard to the distance of nearly a mile, summons the rest, and he is surrounded before he is aware of it, and seized by as many as can get around him.

The Texan hunter, if afoot, will not dare to disturb a drove of peccaries. Even when mounted, unless the woods be open, he will pass them by without rousing their resentment. But for all this, the animal is hunted by the settlers, and hundreds are killed annually. Their ravages committed upon the cornfields make them many enemies, who go after them with a desire for wholesale slaughter.

Hounds are employed to track the peccary and bring it to bay, when the hunters ride up and finish the chase by their unerring rifles.

A flock of peccaries, when pursued, will sometimes take shelter in a cave or cleft of the rocks, one of their number standing ready at the mouth. When this one is shot by the hunter, another will immediately rush out and take its place. This, too, being destroyed, will be replaced by a third, and so on until the whole drove has fallen.

Should the hounds attack the peccary while by themselves, and without the aid and encouragement of the hunter, they are sure to be "routed," and some of their number destroyed. Indeed, this little creature, of not more than two feet in length, is a match for the stoutest

bull-dog! I have myself seen a peccary (a caged one, too) that had killed no less than six dogs of bull and mastiff breed—all of them considered fighting dogs of first-rate reputation.

The Kentuckian had a peccary adventure which had occurred to him while on an excursion to the new settlements of Texas. "It was my first introduction to these animals," began he, "and I am not likely soon to forget it. It gave me, among the frontier settlers of Texas, the reputation of a 'mighty hunter,' though how far I deserved that name you may judge for yourselves.

"I was for some weeks the guest of a farmer, or 'planter,' who lived upon the Trinity Bottom. We had been out in the 'timber' several times, and had killed both bear, deer and turkeys, but had not yet had the luck to fall in with the peccary, although we never went abroad without seeing their tracks, or some other indications of what my friend termed 'peccary sign.' The truth is, that these animals possess the sense of smell in the keenest degree, and they are usually hidden long before the hunter can see them or come near them. As we had gone without dogs, of course we were not likely to discover which of the nine hundred and ninety-nine hollow logs passed in a day was the precise one in which the peccaries had taken shelter.

"I had grown very curious about these creatures. Bear I had often hunted—deer I had driven, and turkeys I had both trapped and shot. But I had never yet killed a peccary; in fact, had never seen one. I was, therefore, very desirous of adding the tusk of one of these wild boars to my trophies of the chase.

"My desire was gratified sooner than I expected, and to an extent I had never dreamt of; for in one morning—before tasting my breakfast—I caused no less than nineteen of these animals to utter their last squeak! But I shall give the details of this 'feat' as they happened.

"It was the autumn season—the most beautiful season of the forest—when the frondage obtains its tints of gold, orange and purple. I was abed in the house of my friend, but was awakened out of my sleep by the 'gobbling' of wild turkeys that sounded close to the place.

"Although there was not a window in my room, the yellow beams streaming in through the chinks of the log wall told me that it was after 'sun-up.'

"I arose, drew on my garments and hunting habiliments, took my rifle, and stole out. I said nothing to any one, as there was no one—neither 'nigger' nor white man—to be seen stirring about the place. I wanted to steal a march upon my friend, and show him how smart I was by bagging a fat young 'gobbler' for breakfast.

"As soon as I had got round the house I saw the turkeys—a large 'gang' of them. They were out in an old cornfield, feeding upon such of the seeds as had been dropped in the corn-gathering. They were too far off for my gun to reach them, and I entered among the corn-stalks to get near them.

"I soon perceived that they were feeding toward the woods, and that they were likely to enter them at a certain point. Could I only reach that point before them, reflected I, I should be sure of a fair shot. I had only to go back to the house and keep around the edge of the field, where there happened to be some 'cover.' In this way I should be sure to 'head' them—that is, could I but reach the woods in time.

"I lost not a moment in setting out, and, running most of the way, I reached the desired point.

"I was now about a mile from my friend's house—for the cornfield was a very large one—such as you may only see in the great plantations of the far western world. I saw that I had 'headed' the turkeys, with some time to spare, and choosing a convenient log, I sat down to await their coming. I placed myself in such a situation that I was completely hidden by the broad green leaves of some bushy trees that grew over the log.

"I had not been in that position over a minute, I should think, when a slight rustling among the leaves attracted my attention. I looked, and saw issuing from under the rubbish the long body of a snake. As yet I could not see its tail, which was hidden by the grass, but the form of the head, and the peculiar chevron-like markings of the body, convinced me it was the 'Banded Rattlesnake.' It was slowly gliding out into some open ground, with the intention of crossing to a thicket upon the other side. I had disturbed it from the log, where it had no doubt been sunning itself, and it was now making away from me.

"My first thought was to follow the hideous reptile and kill it; but reflecting that if I did so I should expose myself to the view of the turkeys, I concluded to remain where I was and let it escape.

"I watched it slowly drawing itself along—for this species makes but slow progress—until it was near the middle of the glade, when I again turned my attention to the birds that had now advanced almost within range of my gun.

"I was just getting ready to fire, when a strange noise, like the grunt of a small pig, sounded in my ears from the glade, and again caused me to look in that direction. As I did so, my eyes fell upon a curious little animal just emerging from the bushes. Its long, sharp snout—its pig-like form—the absence of a tail—the high rump, and whitish band along the shoulders, were all marks of description which I remembered. The animal could be no other than a peccary.

"As I gazed upon it with curious eyes, another emerged from the bushes, and then another, and another, until a good-sized drove of them was in sight.

"The rattlesnake, on seeing the first one, had laid his head flat upon the ground, and evidently terrified, was endeavoring to conceal himself in the grass. But it was a smooth piece of turf, and he did not succeed. The peccary had already espied him, and upon the instant his hinder parts were raised to their full height, his mane became rigid, and the hair over his whole body stood erect, radiating on all sides outward. The appearance of the creature was changed in an instant, and I could perceive that the air was becoming impregnated with a disagreeable odor, which the incensed animal emitted from its dorsal gland. Without stopping longer than a moment, he rushed forward, until he stood within three feet of the body of the snake.

"The latter, seeing he could no longer conceal himself, threw himself into a coil, and stood upon his defense. His eyes glared with a fiery luster; the skir-r-r of his rattles could be heard almost incessantly, while with his upraised head he struck repeatedly in the direction of his enemy.

"These demonstrations brought the whole drove of peccaries to the spot, and in a moment a circle of them had formed around the reptile, that did not know which to strike at, but kept launching out its head recklessly in all directions. The peccaries stood with their backs highly arched and their feet drawn up together, like so many angry cats, threatening and uttering shrill grunts. Then one of them, I think the first that had appeared, rose suddenly into the air, and, with his four hoofs held close together, came pounce down upon the coiled body of the snake. Another followed in a similar manner, and another, and another, until I could see the long carcass of the reptile unfolded and writhing over the ground.

"After a short while it lay still, crushed beneath their feet. The whole squad then seized it in their teeth, and tearing it to pieces, devoured it almost instantaneously.

"From the moment the peccaries had appeared in sight, I had given up all thoughts about the turkeys. I had resolved to send my leaden messenger in quite a different direction. Turkeys I could have at almost any time, but it was not every day that peccaries appeared. So I 'slew' myself round upon the log, raised my rifle cautiously, 'marked' the biggest 'boar' I could see in the drove, and fired.

"I heard the boar squeak (so did all of them), and saw him fall over, either killed or badly wounded. But I had little time to tell which, for the smoke had hardly cleared out of my eyes, when I perceived the whole gang of peccaries, instead of running away, as I had expected, coming full tilt toward me.

"In a moment I was surrounded by a dark mass of little creatures leaping wildly at my legs, uttering shrill grunts, and making their teeth crack like castanets.

"I ran for the highest part of the log, but this proved no security. The peccaries leaped upon it, and followed. I struck with the butt of my clubbed gun, and knocked them off; but again they surrounded me, leaping upward and snapping at my legs, until hardly a shred remained of my trowsers.

"I saw that I was in extreme peril, and put forth all my energies. I swept my gun wildly around me; but where one of the fierce brutes was knocked over, another leaped into his place, as determined as he. Still I had no help for it, and I shouted at the top of my voice, all the while battling with desperation.

"I still kept upon the highest point of the log, as there they could not all come around me at once; and I saw that I could thus better defend myself. But even with this advantage, the assaults of the animals were so incessant, and my exertions in keeping them off so continuous, that I was in danger of falling into their jaws from very exhaustion.

"I was growing weak and wearied—I was beginning to despair for my life—when on winding my gun over my head in order to give force to my blows, I felt it strike against something behind me. It was the branch of a tree, that stretched over the spot where I was standing.

"A new thought came suddenly into my mind. Could I climb the tree? I knew that they could not, and in the tree I should be safe.

"I looked upward; the branch was within reach. I seized upon it and brought it nearer. I drew a long breath, and with all the strength that remained in my body sprung upward.

"I succeeded in getting upon the limb, and the next moment I had crawled along it, and

sat close in by the trunk. I breathed freely—I was safe.

"It was some time before I thought of anything else than resting myself. I remained a full half-hour before I moved in my perch. Occasionally I looked down at my late tormentors. I saw that instead of going off, they were still there. They ran around the root of the tree, leaping up against its trunk, and tearing the bark with their teeth. They kept constantly uttering their shrill, disagreeable grunts; and the odor, resembling the smell of musk and garlic, which they emitted from their dorsal glands almost stifled me. I saw that they showed no disposition to retire, but, on the contrary, were determined to make me stand siege.

"Now and then they passed out to where their dead comrade lay upon the grass, but this seemed only to bind their resolution the faster, for they always returned again, grunting as fiercely as ever.

"I had hopes that my friend would be up by this time, and would come to my rescue; but it was not likely neither, as he would not miss me until I had remained long enough to make my absence seem strange. As it was, that would not be until after night, or perhaps far in the next day. It was no unusual thing for me to wander off with my gun, and be gone for a period of at least twenty hours.

"I sat for hours on my painful perch—now looking down at the spiteful creatures beneath—now bending my eyes across the great cornfield, in hopes of seeing some one. At times the idea crossed my mind, that even upon the morrow I might not be missed.

"I might perish with hunger, with thirst—I was suffering from both at the moment—or even if I kept alive, I might become so weak as not to be able to hold on to the tree. My seat was far from being an easy one. The tree was small—the branch was slender. It was already cutting into my thighs. I might, in my feebleness, be compelled to let it go, and then—

"These reflections were terrible; and as they came across my mind, I shouted to the highest pitch of my voice, hoping I should be heard.

"Up to this time I had not thought of using my gun, although clinging to it instinctively. I had brought it with me into the tree. It now occurred to me to fire it, in hopes that my friend or some one might hear the report.

"I balanced myself on the branch as well as I could, and loaded it with powder. I was about to fire it off in the air, when it appeared to me that I might just as well reduce the number of my enemies. I therefore rammed down a ball, took aim at the forehead of one, and knocked him over.

"Another idea now arose in my mind, and that was, that I might serve the whole gang as I had done this one. His fall had not frightened them in the least; they only came nearer, throwing up their snouts and uttering their shrill notes—thus giving me a better chance of hitting them.

"I repeated the loading and firing. Another enemy the less.

"Hope began to return. I counted my bullets, and held my horn up to the sun. There were over twenty bullets, and powder sufficient. I counted the peccaries. Sixteen still lived, with three that I had done for.

"I again loaded and fired—loaded and fired—loaded and fired. I aimed so carefully each time, that out of all I missed only one shot.

"When the firing ceased, I dropped down from my perch in the midst of a scene that resembled a great slaughter-yard. Nineteen of the creatures lay dead around the tree, and the ground was saturated with their blood!

"The voice of my friend at this moment sounded in my ears, and turning, I beheld him standing, with hands uplifted and eyes as large as saucers.

"The 'feat' was soon reported through the settlement, and I was looked upon for the time as the greatest hunter in the 'Trinity Bottom.'

CHAPTER XL

SQUIRREL SHOOTING.

WE were now traveling among the spurs of the "Ozark hills," and our road was a more difficult one. The ravines were deeper, and as our course obliged us to cross the direction in which most of them ran, we were constantly climbing or descending the sides of steep ridges. There was no road except a faint Indian trail, used by the Kansas in their occasional excursions to the borders of the settlements. At times we were compelled to cut away the underwood, and ply the ax lustily upon some huge trunk that had fallen across the path and obstructed the passage of our wagon. This rendered our progress but slow.

During such halt most of the party strayed off into the woods in search of game. Squirrels were the only four-footed creatures found, and enough of these were shot to make a good-sized "pot-pie," and it may be here remarked, that no sort of flesh is better for this purpose than that of the squirrel.

The species found in these woods was the large cat-squirrel, one of the noblest of its kind. Of course at that season, amid the plenitude of seeds, nuts, and berries, they were as plump as

partridges. This species is usually in good condition, and its flesh the best flavored of all. In the markets of New York they bring three times the price of the common gray squirrel.

As we rode along, the naturalist stated many facts in relation to the squirrel tribe, that were new to most of us. He said that in North America there were not less than twenty species of true squirrels, all of them dwellers in the trees, and by including the "ground" and "flying" squirrel (*tamias* and *pteromys*) the number of species might be more than forty. Of course there are still new species yet undescribed, inhabiting the half-explored regions of the western territory.

The best known of the squirrels is the common "gray squirrel," as it is in most parts of the United States the most plentiful. Indeed it is asserted that some of the other species, as the black squirrel, disappear from districts where the gray squirrels become numerous—as the native rat gives place to the fierce "Norway." The true fox squirrel differs essentially from the "cat," which is also known in many States by the name of fox squirrel. The former is larger, and altogether a more active animal, dashing up to the top of a pine tree in a single run. The cat squirrel, on the contrary, is slow and timid among the branches, and rarely mounts above the first fork, unless when forced higher by the near approach of its enemy. It prefers concealing itself behind the trunk, dodging round the tree as the hunter advances upon it. It has one peculiarity, however, in its mode of escape that often saves it, and disappoints its pursuer. Unless very hotly pursued by a dog, or other swift enemy, it will not be treed until it has reached the tree that contains its nest, and, of course, it drops securely into its hole, bidding defiance to whatever enemy—unless, indeed, that enemy chance to be a pine-martin, which is capable of following it even to the bottom of its dark tree-cave.

Now most of the other squirrels make a temporary retreat to the nearest large tree that offers. This is often without a hole where they can conceal themselves, and they are therefore exposed to the small shot or rifle bullet from below.

It does not always follow, however, that they are brought down from their perch. In very heavy bottom timber the squirrel often escapes among the high twigs, even where there are no leaves to conceal it, nor any hole in the tree. Twenty shots, and from good marksmen too, have been fired at a single squirrel in such situations, without bringing it to the ground or seriously wounding it! A party of hunters have often retired without getting such game, and yet the squirrel has been constantly changing place, and offering itself to be sighted in new positions and attitudes.

The craft of the squirrel on these occasions is remarkable. It stretches its body along the upper part of a branch, elongating it in such a manner that the branch, not thicker than the body itself, forms almost a complete shield against the shot. The head, too, is laid close, and the tail no longer erect, but flattened along the branch, so as to not betray the whereabouts of the animal.

Squirrel-shooting is by no means poor sport. It is the most common kind practiced in the United States, because the squirrel is the most common game. In that country it takes the place that snipe or partridge-shooting holds in England. In my opinion it is a sport superior to either of these last, and the game, when killed, is not much less in value. Good fat squirrel can be cooked in a variety of ways, and many people prefer it to feathered game of any kind. It is true the squirrel has a rat-like physiognomy, but that is only in the eyes of strangers to him. A residence in the backwoods and a short practice in the eating of squirrel pot-pie, soon removes any impression of that kind. A hare, as brought upon the table cloth in England, is far more likely to produce *degout*—from its very striking likeness to "puss," that is purring upon the hearth-rug.

In almost all parts of the United States, a day's squirrel-shooting may be had without the necessity of making a very long journey. There are still tracts of woodland left untouched, where these animals find a home. In the Western States a squirrel-hunt may be had simply by walking a couple of hundred yards from your house, and in some places you may shoot the creatures out of the very door.

To make a successful squirrel-hunt two persons at least are necessary. If only one goes out, the squirrel can avoid him simply by "dodging" round the trunk, or any large limb of the tree. When there are two, one remains stationary, while the other makes a circuit, and drives the game from the opposite side. It is still better when three or four persons make up the party, as then the squirrel is assailed on all sides, and can find no resting-place, without seeing a black tube leveled upon him, and ready to send forth its deadly missile.

Some hunt the squirrels with shot-guns. These are chiefly young hands. The old hunter prefers the rifle; and in the hands of practiced marksmen this is the better weapon. The rifle-bullet, be it ever so small, kills the game at

once; whereas a squirrel severely peppered with shot will often escape to the tree where its hole is, and drop in, often to die of its wounds. No creature can be more tenacious of life—not even a cat. When badly wounded it will cling to the twigs to its last breath, and even after death its claws sometimes retain their hold, and its dead body hang suspended to the branch!

The height from which a squirrel will leap to the ground without sustaining injury, is one of those marvels witnessed by every squirrel-hunter. When a tree in which it has taken refuge is found not to afford sufficient shelter, and a neighboring tree is not near enough for it to leap to, it then perceives the necessity of returning to the ground, to get to some other part of the woods. Some species, as the cat squirrel, fearing to take the dreadful leap (often nearly a hundred feet), rush down by the trunk. Not so the more active squirrels, as the common gray kind. These run to the extremity of a branch, and spring boldly down in a diagonal direction. The hunter—if a stranger to the feat—would expect to see the creature crushed or crippled by the fall. No danger of that. Even the watchful dog that is waiting for such an event, and standing close to the spot, has not time to spring upon it, until it is off again like a flying bird, and, almost as quick as sight can follow, is seen ascending some other tree.

There is an explanation required about this precipitous leap. The squirrel is endowed with the capability of spreading out its body to a great extent, and this in the downward rush it takes care to do—thus breaking its fall by the resistance of the air. This alone accounts for its not killing itself.

Nearly all squirrels possess this power, but in different degrees. In the flying squirrels it is so strongly developed, as to enable them to make a flight resembling that of the birds themselves.

The squirrel-hunter is often accompanied by a dog—not that the dog ever by any chance catches one of these creatures. Of him the squirrel has but little fear, well knowing that he cannot climb a tree. The office of the dog is of a different kind. It is to "tree" the squirrel, and, by remaining at the root, point out the particular tree to his master.

The advantage of the dog is obvious. In fact, he is almost as necessary as the pointer to the sportsman. First, by ranging widely, he beats a greater breadth of the forest. Secondly, when a squirrel is seen by him, his swiftness enables him to hurry it up some tree *not its own*. This second advantage is of the greatest importance. When the game has time enough allowed it, it either makes to its own tree (with a hole in it of course), or selects one of the tallest near the spot. In the former case it is impossible, and in the latter difficult, to have a fair shot at it.

If there be no dog, and the hunter trusts to his own eyes, he is often unable to find the exact tree which the squirrel has climbed, and of course loses it.

A good squirrel-dog is a useful animal. The breed is not important. The best are usually half-bred pointers. They should have good sight as well as scent; should range widely, and run fast. When well trained they will not take after rabbits, or any other game. They will bark only when a squirrel is treed, and remain stanchly by the root of the tree. The barking is necessary, otherwise the hunter, often separated from them by the underwood, would not know when they had succeeded in "treering."

The squirrel seems to have little fear of the dog, and rarely ascends to a great height. It is often seen only a few feet above him, jerking its tail about, and apparently mocking its savage enemy below.

The coming up of the hunter changes the scene. The squirrel then takes the alarm, and shooting up, conceals itself among the higher branches.

Taking it all in all, we know none of the smaller class of field sports that requires greater skill and yields more real amusement than hunting the squirrel.

Our Kentuckian comrade gave us an account of a grand squirrel-hunt got up by himself and some neighbors, which is not an uncommon sort of thing in the Western States. The hunters divided themselves into two parties of equal numbers, each taking his own direction through the woods. A large wager was laid upon the result, to be won by that party that could bring in the greatest number of squirrels. There were six guns on each side, and the numbers obtained at the end of a week—for the hunt lasted so long—were respectively 5,000 and 4,780! Of course, the sport came off in a tract of country where squirrels were but little hunted, and were both tame and plenty.

Such hunts upon a grand scale are, as already stated, not uncommon in some parts of the United States. They have another object besides the sport—that of thinning off the squirrels for the protection of the planter's corn-field. So destructive are these little animals to the corn and other grains that in some States there has been at times a bounty granted for killing them. In early times such a law existed in Pennsylvania, and there is a registry that in

one year the sum of \$8,000 was paid out of the treasury of this bounty-money, which, at three-pence a head—the premium—would make 640,000, the number of the squirrels killed in that year!

The "migration of the squirrels" is still an unexplained fact. It is among the gray squirrels it takes place. There is no regularity about these migrations, and their motive is not known. Immense bands of the squirrels are observed in a particular neighborhood proceeding through the woods or across tracts of open ground, all in one direction. Nothing stays their course. Narrow streams and broad rivers are crossed by them by swimming, and many are drowned in the attempt.

Under ordinary circumstances, these little creatures are as much afraid of water as cats, yet when moving along their track of migration they plunge boldly into a river, without calculating whether they will ever reach the other side. When found upon the opposite bank they are often so tired with the effort that one may overtake them with a stick; and thousands are killed in this way when a migration has been discovered.

It is stated that they roll pieces of dry wood, or bark, into the water, and seating themselves on these are wafted across, their tails supplying them with a sail. Of course, this account must be held as apocryphal.

But the question is, what motive impels them to undertake these long and perilous wanderings, from which, it is thought, they never return to their original place of abode? It cannot be the search for food, nor the desire to change from a colder to a warmer climate. The direction of the wanderings forbids us to receive either of these as the correct reason. No light has been yet thrown upon this curious habit. It would seem as if some strange instinct propelled them, but for what purpose, and to what end, no one can tell.

CHAPTER XII. TREED A BEAR.

THE doctor was the only one not taking part in the conversation. Even the rude guides listened. All that related to game interested them, even the scientific details given by the hunter-naturalist. The doctor had ridden on in front of us. Some one remarked that he wanted water to mix with the contents of his flask, and was therefore searching for a stream. Be this as it may, he was seen suddenly to jerk his spare horse about, and spur back to us, his countenance exhibiting symptoms of surprise and alarm.

"What is it, doctor?" inquired one.

"He has seen Indians," remarked another.

"A bear—a bear!" cried the doctor, panting for breath—"a grizzly bear! A terrible-looking creature, I assure you."

"A b'ar, d'you say?" demanded Ike, shooting forward on his old mare.

"A b'ar!" cried Redwood, breaking through the bushes in pursuit.

"A bear!" shouted the others, all putting spurs to their horses and galloping forward in a body.

"Where, doctor—where?" cried several.

"Yonder," replied the doctor—"just by that great tree. I saw him go in there—a grizzly, I'm sure."

It was this idea that had put the doctor in such affright, and caused him to ride back so suddenly.

"Nonsense, doctor," said the naturalist, "we are yet far to the east of the range of the grizzly bear. It was a black bear you saw."

"As I live," replied the doctor, "it was not black—anything but that. I should know the black bear. It was a light-brown color, almost yellowish."

"Oh, that's no criterion! The black bear is found with many varieties of color. I have seen them of the color you describe; it must be one of them. The grizzly is not found so far to the eastward, although it is possible we may see them soon, but not in woods like these."

There was no time for further explanation. We had come up to the spot where the bear had been seen, and although an unpracticed eye could have detected no traces of the animal's presence, old Ike, Redwood, and the hunter-naturalist could follow its trail over the bed of fallen leaves, almost as fast as they could walk. Both the guides had dismounted, and with their bodies slightly bent, and leading their horses after them, commenced tracking the bear. From Ike's manner one would have fancied that he was guided by scent rather than by sight.

The trail led us from our path, and we had followed it some hundred yards into the woods. Most of us were of the opinion that the creature had never halted after seeing the doctor, but had run off to a great distance. If left to ourselves we should have given over the chase.

The trappers, however, knew what they were about. They asserted that the bear had gone away slowly—that it had made frequent halts—that they discovered "sign" to lead them to the conclusion that the animal's haunt was in the neighborhood—that its "nest" was near. We were therefore encouraged to proceed.

All of us rode after the trackers. Jake and Lanty had been left with the wagon, with directions to keep on their route. After awhile we heard the wagon moving along directly in front of us. The road had angled as well as the bear's trail, and the two were again converging.

Just at that moment a loud shouting came from the direction of the wagon. It was Lanty's voice, and Jake's too.

"Och! be the Vargin mother! luck therel Awch, mother o' Moses! Jake, such a baste!"

"Golly, Massa Lanty, it am a b'ar!"

We all heard this at once. Of course we thought of the trail no longer, but made a rush in the direction of the voices, causing the branches to fly on every side.

"Whar's the b'ar?" cried Redwood, who was first up to the wagon; "whar did ye see't?"

"Yander he goes!" cried Lanty, pointing to a piece of heavy timber, beset with an undergrowth of cane, but standing almost isolated from the rest of the forest on account of the thin open woods that were around it.

We were too late to catch a glimpse of him, but perhaps he would halt in the undergrowth. If so we had a chance.

"Surround, boys, surround!" cried the Kentuckian, who understood bear-hunting as well as any of the party. "Quick, round and head him;" and, at the same time, the speaker urged his great horse into a gallop. Several others rode off on the opposite side, and in a few seconds we had surrounded the cane brake.

"Is he in it?" cried one.

"Do you track 'im thur, Mark!" cried Ike to his comrade from the opposite side.

"No," was the reply, "he hain't gone out this-a-way."

"Nor hyur," responded Ike.

"Nor here," said the Kentuckian.

"Nor by here," added the hunter-naturalist.

"Belike, then, he's still in the timmer," said Redwood. "Now look out all of yeas. Keep your eyes skinned, I'll hustle him out o' thar."

"Hold on, Mark, boy," cried Ike, "hold on thur. Hyur's his track, paddled like a sheep-pen. Wagh, his den's hyur—let me rout 'im."

"Very wal, then," replied the other; "go ahead, old fellow—I'll look to my side—thul'll no b'ar pass me 'ithout gettin' a pill in his guts. Out wi' 'im!"

We all sat in our saddles silent and watchful. Ike had entered the cane, but not a rustle was heard. A snake could not have passed through it with less noise than did the old trapper.

It was full ten minutes before the slightest sound warned of what he was about. Then his voice reached us:

"This way, all of you! The b'ar's treed."

This announcement filled all of us with pleasant anticipations. The sport of killing a bear is no every-day amusement, and now that the animal was "treed," we were sure of him. Some dismounted and hitched their horses to the branches; others boldly dashed into the cane, hurrying to the spot, with the hope of having first shot.

Why was Ike's rifle not heard if he saw the bear treed? This puzzled some. It was explained when we got up. Ike's words were figurative. The bear had not taken shelter in a tree, but a hollow log, and, of course, Ike had not yet set eyes on him. But there was the log, a huge one, some ten or more feet in thickness, and there was the hole, with the well-beaten track leading into it. It was his den. He was there to a certainty.

How to get him out? That was the next question.

Several took their stations, guns in hand, commanding the entrance to the hollow. One went back upon the log, and pounded it with the butt of his gun. To no purpose. Bruin was not such a fool as to walk out and be peppered by bullets.

A long pole was next thrust up the hollow. Nothing could be felt. The den was beyond reach.

Smoking was next tried, but with like success. The bear gave no sign of being annoyed with it. The axes were now brought from the wagon. It would be a tough job—for the log (a sycamore) was sound enough except near the heart. There was no help for it, and Jake and Lanty went to work as if for a day's rail-splitting.

Redwood and the Kentuckian, both good axmen, relieved them, and a deep notch soon began to make its appearance on each side of the log. The rest of us kept watch near the entrance, hoping the sound of the ax might drive out the game. We were disappointed in that hope, and for full two hours the chopping continued, until the patience and the arms of those that plied the ax were nearly tired out.

It is no trifling matter to lay open a tree ten feet in diameter. They had chosen the place for their work guided by the long pole. It could not be beyond the den, and if upon the near side of it, the pole would then be long enough to reach the bear, and either destroy him with a knife blade attached to it, or force him out. This was our plan, and therefore we were encouraged to proceed.

At length the axes broke through the wood and the dark interior lay open. They had cut

in the right place, for the den of the bear was found directly under, but no bear! Poles were inserted at both openings, but no bear could be felt either way. The hollow ran up no further, so after all there was no bear in the log.

There were some disappointed faces about—and some rather rough ejaculations were heard. I might say that Ike "cussed a few," and that would be no more than the truth. The old trapper seemed to be ashamed of being so taken in, particularly as he had somewhat exultingly announced that the "b'ar was treed."

"He must have got off before we surrounded," said one.

"Are you sure he came into the timber?" asked another—"that fool, Lanky, was so scared, he could hardly tell where the animal went."

"Be me soull! gintlemen, I saw him go in wid my own eyes, Oil swear—"

"Cussed queer!" spitefully remarked Redwood.

"Cuss the b'ar!" ejaculated Ike, "whur kid the varmint 'a' gone?"

Where was A—? All eyes were turned to look for the hunter-naturalist, as if he could clear up the mystery. He was nowhere to be seen. He had not been seen for some time!

At that moment, the clear sharp ring of a rifle echoed in our ears. There was a moment's silence, and the next moment a loud "thump" was heard, as of a heavy body falling from a great height to the ground. The noise startled even our tired horses, and some of them broke their ties and scampered off.

"This way, gentlemen!" said a quiet voice, "here's the bear!"

The voice was A—'s; and we all, without thinking of the horses, hurried up to the spot. Sure enough, there lay the great brute, a red stream oozing out of a bullet-hole in his ribs.

A— pointed to a tree—a huge oak that spread out above our heads.

"There he was, in yonder fork," said he. "We might have saved ourselves a good deal of trouble had we been more thoughtful. I suspected he was not in the log when the smoke failed to move him. The brute was too sagacious to hide there. It is not the first time I have known the hunter foiled by such a trick."

The eyes of Redwood were turned admiringly on the speaker, and even old Ike could not help acknowledge his superior hunter-craft.

"Mister," he muttered, "I guess you'd make a darned fast-rate mountain man. He's a gone Injun when you look through sights."

All of us were examining the huge carcass of the bear—one of the largest size.

"You're sure it's no grizzly?" inquired the doctor.

"No, doctor," replied the naturalist, "the grizzly never climbs a tree."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE BLACK BEAR OF AMERICA.

AFTER some time spent in recovering the horses, we lifted the bear into Jake's wagon and proceeded on our journey. It was near evening, however, and we soon after halted and formed a camp. The bear was skinned in a trice—Ike and Redwood performing this operation with the dexterity of a pair of butchers; of course "bear-meat" was the principal dish for supper; and although some may think this rather a savage feast, I envy those who are in the way of a bear-ham now.

Of course for that evening nothing was talked of but Bruin, and a good many anecdotes were related about the beast. With the exception of the doctor, Jake and Lanty, all of us had something to say upon that subject, for all the rest had more or less practice in bear-hunting.

The black or American bear is one of the best known of his tribe.

Any one at a glance may distinguish him from the "brown bear" of Europe, as well as the other bears of the Eastern continent, not so much by his color (for he is sometimes brown, too), as by his form and the regularity and smoothness of his coat. He may be as easily distinguished, too, from his congeners of North America—of which there are three—the grizzly, the brown, and the polar. The hair upon other large bears (the polar excepted) is what may be termed "tuffy," and their forms are different, being generally more uncouth and "chunkier." The black bear is, in fact, nearer to the polar in shape, as well as in the arrangement of his fur, than to any other of the tribe. He is much smaller, however, rarely exceeding two-thirds the weight of large specimens of the latter.

His color is usually a deep black all over the body, with a patch of rich yellowish red upon the muzzle, where the hair is short and smooth. This ornamental patch is sometimes absent, and varieties of the black bear are seen of very different colors. Brown ones are common in some parts, and others of a cinnamon color, and still others with white markings, but these last are rare. They are all of one species, however, the assertions of some naturalists to the contrary notwithstanding. The proof is that the black varieties have been seen followed by colored cubs, and vice versa.

The black bear is omnivorous—feeds upon flesh as well as fruit, nuts, and edible roots. Habitually his diet is not carnivorous, but he

will eat at times either carrion or living flesh. We say living flesh, for on capturing prey he does not wait to kill it, as most carnivorous animals, but tears and destroys it while still screaming. He may be said to swallow some of his food alive!

Of honey he is especially fond, and robs the bee-hive whenever it is accessible to him. It is not safe from him even in the top of a tree, provided the entrance to it is large enough to admit his body; and when it is not he often contrives to make it so by means of his sharp claws. He has but little fear of the stings of the angry bees. His shaggy coat and thick hide afford him ample protection against such puny weapons. It is supposed that he spends a good deal of his time ranging the forest in search of "bee-trees."

Of course he is a tree-climber—climbs by the "hug," not by means of his claws, as do animals of the cat kind; and in getting to the ground again descends the trunk straight foremost as a hod-carrier would come down a ladder. In this he again differs from the *felidae*.

The range of the black bear is extensive—in fact it may be said to be collimital with the forest, both in North and South America—though in the latter division of the continent, another species of large black bear exists. In the northern continent the American bear is found in all the wooded parts from the Atlantic to the Pacific, but not in the open and prairie districts. There the grizzly holds dominion, though both of them range together in the wooded valleys of the Rocky Mountains. The grizzly, on the other hand, is only met with west of the Mississippi, and affects the dry desert countries of the uninhabited West. The brown bear, supposed to be identical with the bear of North Europe, is only met with in the wild and treeless tract known as "Barren Grounds," which stretch across nearly the whole northern part of the continent, from the last timber to the shores of the Arctic Sea, and in this region the black bear is not found. The zone of the polar bear joins with that of the brown, and the range of the former extends perhaps to the pole itself.

At the time of the colonization of America, the area of the present United States was the favorite home of the black bear. It was a country entirely covered with thick forests, and of course a suitable *habitat* for him. Even to this day a considerable number of bears is to be found within the limits of the settlements. Scarcely a State in which some wild woodlands or mountain fastnesses do not afford shelter to a number of bears, and to kill one of them is a grand object of the hunter's ambition. Along the whole range of the Alleghanies black bears are yet found, and it will be long ere they are finally extirpated from such haunts. In the Western States they are still more common, where they inhabit the gloomy forests along the rivers and creek bottoms, protected alike by the thick undergrowth and the swampy nature of the soil.

Their den is usually in a hollow tree—sometimes a prostrate log, if the latter be large enough, and in such a position as is not likely to be observed by the passing hunter. A cave in the rocks is also their favorite lair, when the geological structure of the country offers them so secure a retreat. They are safer thus; for when a bear-tree or log has been discovered by either hunter or farmer, the bear has not much chance of escape. The squirrel is safe enough, as his capture will not repay the trouble of felling the tree; but such noble game as a bear will repay whole hours of hard work with the

The black bear lies torpid during several months of the winter. The time of his hibernation depends upon the latitude of the place and the coldness of the climate. As you approach the south this period becomes shorter and shorter, until in the tropical forests, where frost is unknown, the black bear ranges throughout the year.

The mode of hunting the black bear does not differ from that practiced with the fox or wild-cat. He is usually chased by dogs, and forced into his cave or a tree. If the former, he is shot down, or the tree, if hollow, is felled. Sometimes smoking brings him out. If he escapes to a cave, smoking is also tried; but if that will not succeed in dislodging him, he must be left alone, as no dogs will venture to attack him there.

The hunter often tracks and kills him in the woods with a bullet from his rifle. He will not turn upon man unless when wounded or brought to bay. Then his assault is to be dreaded. Should he grasp the hunter between his great forearms, the latter will stand a fair chance of being hugged to death. He does not attempt to use his teeth like the grizzly bear, but relies upon the muscular power of his arms. The nose appears to be his tenderest part, and his antagonist, if an old bear-hunter, and sufficiently cool, will use every effort to strike him there. A blow upon the snout has often caused the black bear to let go his hold, and retreat terrified!

The log-trap is sometimes tried with success. This is constructed in such a way that the re-

moval of the bait operates upon a trigger, and a large, heavy log comes down on the animal removing it—either crushing it to death or holding it fast by pressure. A limb is sometimes only caught; but this proves sufficient.

The same kind of trap is used throughout the northern regions of America by the fur trappers—particularly the sable-hunters and trappers of the white weasel (*Mustela erminea*). Of course, that for the bear is constructed of the heaviest logs, and is of large dimensions.

Redwood related an adventure that had befallen him while trapping the black bear at an earlier period of his life. It had nearly cost him his life, too, and a slight halt in his gait could still be observed, resulting from that very adventure.

We all collected around the blazing logs to listen to the trapper's story.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE TRAPPER TRAPPED.

"WELL, then," began Redwood, "the thing I'm a-goin' to tell you about happened to me when I war a younker, long afore I ever thought I was a-coming out hyar upon the parairas. I wa'n't quite growed at the time, though I was a good chunk for my age.

"It war up thar among the mountains in East Tennessee, whar this child war raised, upon the head-waters of the Tennessee River.

"I war fond o' huntin' from the time that I war knee-high to a duck, an' I can jes' remember killin' a black b'ar afore I war twelve year old. As I growed up, the b'ar had become scarcer in them parts, and it wa'n't every day you could scare up such a varmint, but now and then one 'ud turn up.

"Well, one day as I war poking about the crick bottom (for the shanty whar my ole mother lived war not on the Tennessee, but on a crick that runs into it), I diskivered b'ar sign. Crick that runs into it), I diskivered b'ar sign. Thar war tracks o' the b'ar's paws in the mud, an' I follered them along the water edge for nearly a mile—then the trail turned into about as thickety a bottom as I ever see'd anywhar. It would 'a' baffled a cat to crawl through it.

"After the trail went out from the crick and toward the edge o' this thickety, I lost all hopes o' follerin' it further, as the ground was hard, and covered with donicks, and I couldn't make the tracks out nohow. I had my idea that the b'ar had tuk the thickety, so I went round the edge of to see if I could find whar he had entered.

"For a long time I couldn't see a spot whar any critter as big as a b'ar could 'a' got in without makin' some sort o' a hole, and then I begun to think the b'ar had gone some other way, either across the crick or further down it.

"I war a-goin' to turn back to the water when I spied a big log lyin' half out o' the thickety, with one end buried in the bushes. I noticed that the top of this log had a dirty look, as if some animal had tramped about on it; an' on goin' up an' squintin' at it a little closter, I see'd that that guess war the right one.

"I clomb the log, for it war a regular rouser, bigger than that 'n we had so much useless trouble with, and then I scammeled along the top o' it in the direction of the brush. Thar I see'd the very hole whar the b'ar had got into the thickety, and thar war a regular beaten path runnin' through the brake as far as I could see.

"I jumped off o' the log, and squeezed myself through the bramble. It war a trail easy enough to find, but mighty hard to foller, I can tell ye. Thar war thistles, and cussed stinging nettles, and briars as thick as my wrist, with claws upon them as sharp as fish-hooks. I pushed on, howsomever, feelin' quite sartin that sich a well-used track must lead to the b'ar's den, an' I war safe enough to find it. In coorse, I reckoned that the critter had his nest in some holler tree, and I could go home for my ax and come back the next morning—if smoking failed to git him out.

"Well, I poked on through the thickety a good three hundred yards, sometimes crouching and sometimes creeping on my hands and knees. I war badly scratched, I tell you, and now and then I jest thought to myself, what would be the consyquence if the b'ar should meet me in that narrow passage. We'd 'a' had a tough tussle, I reckon—but I met no b'ar.

"At last the brush grew thinner, and jest as I was in hopes I might stumble on the b'ar tree, what shed I see afore me but the face o' a rocky bluff, that riz a consid'able hight over the crick bottom. I begun to fear that the varmint had a cave, and so, cuss him, he had—a great black gully in the rocks was right close by, and thar was his den, and no mistake. I could easily tell it by the way the clay and stones had been pattered over by his paws.

"Of coorse, my tracking for that day war over, and I stood by the mouth of the cave, not knowin' what to do. I didn't feel inclined to go in.

"After a while I bethought me that the b'ar mou't come out, an' I laid myself squat down among the bushes facing the cave. I had my gun ready to give him a mouthful of lead as soon as he should show his snout outside o' the hole.

"Twar no go. I guess he had heerd me when I first come up, and know'd I war thar. I laid still until 'twar so dark I thought I would never find my way back ag'in to the crick; but, after a good deal of scramblin' and creepin', I got out at last, and took my way home.

"It warn't likely I war a-goin' to give that b'ar up. I war bound to fetch him out o' his boots if it cost me a week's hunting. So I returned the next morning to the place, and lay all day in front o' the cave. No b'ar appeared, and I went back home a-cussin'.

"Next day I come again, but this time I didn't intend to stay. I had fetched my ax with me w' the intention of riggin' up a log-trap near the mouth o' the cave. I had also fetched a jug o' molasses and some yeers o' green corn to bait the trap, for I know'd the b'ar war fond o' both.

"Well, I got upon the spot, an' makin' as leetle rumpus as possible, I went to work to build my trap. I found some logs on the ground, jest the scantlin, and in less than an hour I hed the thing rigged an' the trigger set. 'Twa'n't no small lift to get up the big log, but I managed it w' a lever I had made, though it took every pound o' strength in my body. If it come down on the b'ar I knew it would hold him.

"Well, I had all ready except layin' the bait; so I crawled in, and was fixin' the green yeers and the 'lasses, when jest at that moment what shed I hear behind me but the 'sniff' o' the b'ar!

"I turned suddenly to see. I had jest got my eye on the critter standin' right in the mouth o' his cave, when I feeled myself struck upon the buttocks, and flattened down to the airth like a pancake!

"At the first stroke I thought somebody had hit me a heavy blow from behind, and I wish it had been that. It war wusser than that. It war the log had hit me, and war now lyin' with all its weight right across my two legs. In my hurry to git round I had sprung the trigger, and down comed the log on my hams.

"At fust I wa'n't scared, but I war badly hurt. I thought it would be all right as soon as I had crawled out, and I made an attempt to do so. It was then that I become scared in airnest; for I found that I couldn't crawl out. My legs were held in such a way that I couldn't move them and the more I pulled the more I hurt them. They were in pain already with the heavy weight pressin' upon them, and I couldn't bear to move them. No more could I turn myself. I war flat on my face, and couldn't slew myself round any way, so as to get my hands at the log. I war fairly caught in my own trap!

"It war jest about then I began to feel scared. Thar wa'n't no settlement in the hul crick bottom but my mother's old shanty, an' that were two miles higher up. It war as unlikely a thing as could happen that anybody would be passing that way. And unless some one did I saw no chance of gettin' cl'ar o' the scrape I war in. I could do nothin' for myself.

"I hollered as loud as I could, and that frightened the b'ar into his cave again. I hollered for an hour, but I could hear no reply, and then I war still a bit, and then I hollered again, an' kept this up pretty much for the hul o' that blessed day.

"Thar wa'n't any answer but the echo o' my own shoutin', and the whoopin' of the owls that flew about over my head, and appeared as if they war mockin' me.

"My ole mother had nobody but myself, and she wa'n't like to miss me, as I'd often stayed out a-huntin' for three or four days at a time. The only chance I had, and I knew it too, war that some neighbor might be strayin' down the crick, and you may guess what sort o' chance that war, when I tell you thar wa'n't a neighbor livin' within less than five mile o' us. If no one come by I knew I must lay there till I died o' hunger and rotted, or the b'ar ate me up.

"Well, night come, and night went. 'Twar about the longest night this child remembers. I lay all through it, a-sufferin' the pain, and listening to the screechin' owls. I could 'a' screeched as loud as any of them if that would a-done any good. I heerd now and then the snuffin' o' the b'ar, and I could see thar war two o' them. I could see thar big black bodies movin' about like shadows, and they appeared to be gettin' less afeerd o' me, as they come close at times, and risin' up on their hind-quarters stood in front o' me like a couple o' black devils.

"I begun to get afeerd they would attack me, and so I guess they would a-done, had not a circumstance happened that put them out o' the notion.

"It war jest gray day, when one o' them come so clost that I expected to be attacked by him. Now luck would have it, my rifle happened to be lyin' on the ground within reach. I grabbed it without saying a word, an' slewin' up one shoulder as high as I could, I was able to sight the b'ar just behind the fore-leg. The brute wa'n't four feet from the muzzle, and slap into him went wad and all, and down he tumbled like a felled ox. I see'd he war as dead as a buck.

"Well, badly as I war fixed, I contrived to get loaded again, for I knowed that b'ars will fight for each other to the death; and I thought the other might attack me. It wa'n't to be seen at the time, but shortly after it come upon the ground from the direction of the crik.

"I watched it closely as it shambled up, having my rifle ready all the while. When it first set eyes on its dead comrade it gave a loud snort, and stopped. It appeared to be considerably surprised. It only halted a short spell, and then, with a loud roar, it run up to the carcass, and sniffed at it.

"I hain't the least o' a doubt that in two seconds more it would 'a' jumped me, but I war too quick for it, and sent a bullet right plum into one of its eyes, that come out again near the back o' its neck. That did the business, and I had the satisfaction to see it cowlolop over nearly on top o' the other'n.

"Well, I had killed the b'ars, but what o' that? That wouldn't get me from under the log; and what wi' the pain I was sufferin', and the poor prospect o' bein' relieved, I thought I mout as well have let them eat me.

"But a man don't die so long as he can help it, I b'lieve, and I detarmined to live it out while I could. At times I had hopes, and shouted, and then I lost hope and lay still again.

"I grew as hungry as a famished wolf. The b'ars were lying right before me, but jest beyond reach, as if to tantalise me. I could have ate a collop raw if I could have got hold of it, but how to reach it war the diffeeculty.

"Needcessity the' say is the mother o' invention; and I set myself to invent a bit. Thar war a piece o' rope I had brought along to help me wi' the trap, and that I got my claws on.

"I made a noose on one end o' it, and after about a score o' trials I at last flung the noose over the head o' one o' the b'ars, and drew it tight. I then sot to work to pull the b'ar nearer. If that b'ar's neck wan't well stretched I don't know what you'd call stretchin', for I tugged at it about an hour afore I could git it within reach. I did get it at last, and then with my knife I cut out the b'ar's tongue, and ate it raw.

"I had satisfied one appetite, but another as bad, if not wusser, troubled me. That war thirst—my throat war as dry as a corn-cob, and whar war the water to come from? It grew so bad at last that I thought I would die of it. I drew the b'ar nearer me, and cut his jug'lar to see if thar war any relief from that quarter. Thar wa'n't. The blood war froze up tuck as liver. Not a drop would run.

"I lay coolin' my tongue on the blade o' my knife and chawin' a bullet that I had taken from my pouch. I managed to put in the hul o' the next day this-a-way, now and then shoutin' as loud as I could. Toward the evenin' I grew hungry again, and ate a cut out o' the cheek o' the b'ar; but I thought I would 'a' choked for want o' water.

"I put in the night the best way I could. I had the owls again for company, and some varmint came up and smelt at the b'ars; but was frightened at my voice, and run away again. I suppose it war a fox or wolf, or some such thing, and but for me would 'a' made a meal off o' the b'ar's carcass.

"I won't trouble you with my reflexshuns all that night; but I can assure ye they war anything but pleasant. I thought of my ole mother who had nobody but me, and that helped to keep up my spirits. I detarmined to cut away at the b'ar, and hold out as long as possible.

"As soon as day broke I set up my shoutin' again, restin' every fifteen minutes or so, and then takin' a fresh start. About an hour after sun-up, jest as I had finished a long spell o' screechin', I thought I heard a voice. I listened a bit with my heart thumpin' against my ribs. Thar war no sound. I yelled louder than ever, and then listened. Thar war a voice.

"What are ye hollowin' about?" cried the voice.

"I again shouted 'Holloa!'

"Who's thar?" inquired the voice.

"Casey!" I called back, recognizing the voice as that of a neighbor who lives up the crik; 'for God's sake come this way.'

"I'm a-comin'," he replied. "Tain't so easy to get through hyar—that you, Redwood? What's the matter?"

"I heard my neighbor breakin' his way through the thicket, and strange I tell ye all, but true it is, I couldn't believe I war goin' to get cl'ar even then until I see'd Casey standin' in front o' me.

"Well, of course, I was now set free again, but couldn't set a foot to the ground. Casey carried me home to the shanty, whar I lay for well-nigh six weeks afore I could go about, and I hain't got over it yet."

So ended Redwood's story.

CHAPTER XV.

DEER-HUNTING.

As we were now approaching the regions where the common fallow-deer ceased to be met with, and where its place is supplied by two other species, these last became the subject of

our talk. The species referred to are the "black-tails" and "long-tails."

Ike and Redwood were well acquainted with both kinds, as they had often trapped beaver in the countries where these deer are found, and they gave us a very good account of the habits of these animals. The great length of their ears gives to their heads something of a "mulish" look—hence they are often known among the trappers by the name of "mule deer." Ike and Redwood spoke of them by this name, although they also knew them as "black-tails," and this last is the designation most generally used. They receive it on account of the color of the hair upon the upper side of their tail-tips, which is of a jetty blackness, and is very full and conspicuous.

The two species have been often confounded with each other, though in many respects they are totally unlike. The black-tails are larger, their legs shorter and their bodies more "chunky," and altogether of stouter build. In running they bound with all their feet raised at once, while those of the long-tailed species run more like the common fallow deer—by trotting a few steps, then giving a bound and trotting as before.

Both species inhabit woodlands occasionally, but their favorite habitat is the prairie, or that species of undulating country where prairie and forest alternate, forming a succession of groves and openings. Both are found only in the western half of the continent—that is, in the wild regions extending from the Mississippi to the Pacific. In longitude, as far east as the Mississippi, they are rarely seen, but as you travel westward, either approaching the Rocky Mountains, or beyond these to the shores of the Pacific, they are the common deer of the country. The black-tailed kind is more southern in its range. It is found in the Californias and the valleys of the Rocky Mountains as far south as Texas, while to the north it is met with in Oregon, and on the eastern side of the Rocky Mountains, as high as the fifty-fourth parallel. The long-tailed species is the most common deer of Oregon and the Columbia river, and its range also extends east of the Rocky Mountains, though not so far as the longitude of the Mississippi.

The hunter-naturalist, who had some years before made a journey to Oregon, gave us a full account of them, and related a stirring adventure that had befallen him while hunting "long-tails" upon the Columbia.

"The long-tailed deer," began he, "is one of the smallest of the deer kind. Its weight rarely exceeds one hundred pounds. It resembles in form and habits the common fallow deer, the chief distinction being the tail, which is a very conspicuous object. This appendage is often found to measure eighteen inches in length!

"While running, the tail is held erect, and kept constantly switching from side to side, so as to produce a singular and somewhat ludicrous effect upon the mind of the spectator.

"The gait of this animal is also peculiar. It first takes two ambling steps that resemble a trot, after these it makes a long bound, which carries it about twice the distance of the steps, and then it trots again. No matter how closely pursued, it never alters this mode of progression.

"Like the fallow deer, it produces spotted fawns, which are brought forth in the spring, and change their color to that of the deer itself, in the first winter. About the month of November they gather into herds, and remain together until April, when they separate, the females secreting themselves to bring forth their young.

"The long-tailed deer is often found in wooded countries; though its favorite haunts are not amid the heavy timber of the great forests, but in the park-like openings that occur in many parts of the Rocky Mountain valleys.

"Sometimes whole tracts of country are met with in these regions, whose surface exhibits a pleasing variety of woodland and prairie; sloping hills appear with coppices upon their crests and along their sides. Among these natural groves may be seen troops of the long-tailed deer, browsing along the declivities of the hills, and by their elegant attitudes and graceful movements, adding to the beauty of the landscape.

"Some years ago I had an opportunity of hunting the long-tailed deer. I was on my way across the Rocky Mountains to Fort Vancouver, when circumstances rendered it necessary that I should stop for some days at a small trading-post on one of the branches of the Columbia. I was, in fact, detained, waiting for a party of fur-traders with whom I was to travel, and who required some time to get their packs in readiness.

"The trading-post was a small place, with miserable accommodations, having scarcely room enough in its two or three wretched log-cabins to lodge half the company that happened at the time to claim its hospitality. There was nothing to be seen around but packs of beaver, otter, mink, fox and bearskins; and nothing to be heard but the incessant chattering of Canadian voyageurs, in their mixed jargon of French, English and Indian. To make matters

still more unpleasant, there was very little to eat, and nothing to drink but the clear water of the little mountain-stream upon which the fort was built.

"The surrounding country, however, was beautiful; and the lovely landscapes that on every side met the eye almost compensated for the discomforts of the post. The surface of the country was what is termed as rolling—gentle undulations here and there rising into dome-shaped hills of low elevation. These were crowned with copses of shrubby trees, principally of the wild filbert or hazel, with several species of raspberry and bushes of the juneberry, with their clusters of purplish-red fruit. The openings between were covered with a sward of short gramma grass, and the whole landscape presented the appearance of a cultivated park; so that one involuntarily looked along the undulating outlines of the hills for some noble mansion or lordly castle.

"It is in just such situations that the fallow deer delights to dwell; and these are the favorite haunts of its near congeners, the long-tails. I had ascertained this from the people at the post; and the fact that fresh venison formed our staple and daily food was proof sufficient that some species of deer was to be found in the neighborhood. I was not long, therefore, after my arrival, in putting myself in train for a hunt.

"Unfortunately, the gentlemen of the company were too busy to go along with me; so also were the numerous *engages*; and I set out, taking only my servant, a *bois brule*, or half-breed, who happened, however, to be a good guide for such an expedition, as well as a first-rate hunter.

"Setting out, we kept down the stream for some distance, walking along its bank. We saw numerous deer-tracks in the mud, where the animals had gone to and from the water. These tracks were almost fresh, and many of them, as my servant averred, must have been made the previous night by the animals coming to drink—a common habit with them, especially in hot weather.

"But strange to say, we walked a mile or more without getting a glimpse of a single deer, or any other sort of animal. I was becoming discouraged, when my man proposed that we should leave the stream, and proceed back among the hills. The deer, he believed, would be found there.

"This was resolved upon, and we accordingly struck out for the high ground. We soon climbed up from the river bottom, and threaded our way amid the fragrant shrubbery of amelanchiers and wild-roses, cautiously scrutinizing every new vista that opened before us.

"We had not gone far before we caught sight of several deer; we could also hear them at intervals, behind the copses that surrounded us, the males uttering a strange whistling sound, similar to that produced by blowing into the barrel of a gun, while this was occasionally replied to by the goat-like bleat of the females.

"Strange to say, however, they were all very shy, and notwithstanding much cautious crouching and creeping among the bushes, we wandered about for nearly two-thirds of the day without getting a shot at any of them.

"What had made them so wary we could not at the time tell, but we afterward learned that a large party of Flathead Indians had gone over the ground only a few days before, and had put the deer through a three days' chase, from which they had not yet recovered. Indeed, we saw Indian "sign" all along the route, and at one place came upon the head and horns of a fine buck, which from some fancy or other of the hunter, had been left suspended from the branch of a tree, and had thus escaped being stripped by the wolves.

"At sight of this trophy, my companion appeared to be in ecstasies. I could not understand what there was in a worthless set of antlers to produce such joyful emotions; but as Blue Dick—such was the *sobriquet* of my servant—was not much given to idle exhibitions of feeling, I knew there must be something in it.

"Now, master," said he, addressing me, "if I had something else, I could promise you a shot at the long-tails, shy as they are."

"Something else! What do you want?" I inquired.

"Something that ought to grow about yar, else I'm mightily mistaken in the sign. Let me try down yonder," and Dick pointed to a piece of low, swampy ground that lay to one side of our course.

"I assented, and followed him to the place.

"We had hardly reached the border of the wet ground when an exclamation from my companion told me that the 'something' he wanted was in sight.

"Yonder, master; the very weed: see yonder."

"Dick pointed to a tall herbaceous plant that grew near the edge of the swamp. Its stem was fully eight feet in height, with large lobed

leaves, and a wide-spreading umbel of pretty white flowers. I knew the plant well. It was that which is known in some places as masterwort, but more commonly by the name of cow parsnip. Its botanical name is *Heracleum lanatum*. I knew that its roots possessed stimulant and carminative properties; but that the plant had anything to do with deer-hunting, I was ignorant.

"Dick, however, was better acquainted with its uses in that respect, and his hunter-craft soon manifested itself.

"Drawing his knife from its sheath, he cut one of the joints from the stem of the heracleum, about six inches in length. This he commenced fashioning somewhat after the manner of a penny trumpet.

"In a few minutes he had whittled it to the proper form and dimensions, after which he put up his knife, and applying the pipe to his lips, blew into it. The sound produced was so exactly like that which I had already heard to proceed from the deer, that I was startled by the resemblance.

"Not having followed his maneuvers, I fancied for a moment that we had got into close proximity with one of the long tails. My companion laughed, as he pointed triumphantly to his new made 'call.'

"Now, master," said he, "we'll soon 'rub out' one of the long-tail bucks."

"So saying, he took up the antlers, and desired me to follow him.

"We proceeded as before, walking quickly but cautiously among the thickets, and around their edges. We had gone only a few hundred paces further, when the hollow whistle of a buck sounded in our ears.

"Now," muttered Dick, "we have him. Squat down, master, under the bush—so."

"I did as desired, hiding myself under the leafy branches of the wild rose-trees. My companion cowered down beside me in such an attitude that he himself was concealed, while the buck's head and antlers were held above the foliage, and visible from several points where the ground was open.

"As soon as we were fairly placed, Dick applied the call to his lips, and blew his mimic note several times in succession. We heard what appeared to be an echo, but it was the response of a rival; and shortly after we could distinguish a hoof-stroke upon the dry turf, as if some animal was bounding toward us.

"Presently appeared a fine buck, at an opening between two copses, about one hundred paces from the spot where we lay. It had halted, thrown back upon its flanks until its haunches almost touched the ground, while its full large eye glanced over the opening, as if searching for some object.

"At this moment Dick applied the reed to his lips, at the same time moving the horns backward and forward, in imitation of a buck moving his head in a threatening manner.

"The stranger now perceived what appeared to him the branching horns of a rival, bearing, at the same time, the well known challenge. This was not to be borne, and rising erect on all-fours, with his brow-antlers set forward, he accepted the challenge, and came bounding forward.

"At the distance of twenty paces or so, he again halted, as if still uncertain of the character of his enemy; but that halt was fatal to him, for by Dick's directions I had made ready my rifle, and taking sight at his breast, I pulled trigger. The result was as my companion had predicted, and the buck was 'rubbed out.'

"After skinning our game, and hanging the meat out of reach of the barking wolves, we proceeded as before; and soon after another buck was slain in a manner very similar to that described.

"This ended our day's hunt, as it was late before Dick had bethought him of the decoy; and taking the best parts of both the long-tails upon our shoulders, we trudged homeward to the post.

"Part of our road, as we returned, lay along the stream, and we saw several deer approaching the water, but, cumbered as we were, we failed in getting a shot. An idea, however, was suggested to my companion that promised us plenty of both sport and venison for the next hunt—which was to take place by night.

"This idea he communicated to me for my approval. I readily gave my consent, as I saw in the proposal the chances of enjoying a very rare sport. That sport was to be a fire-hunt; but not as usually practiced among back-woodsmen, by carrying a torch through the woods. Our torch was to float upon the water, while we were snugly seated beside it; in other words, we would carry our torch in a canoe, and, floating down-stream, would shoot the deer that happened to be upon the banks drinking or cooling their hoofs in the water. I had heard of the plan, but had never practiced it, although I was desirous of so doing. Dick had often killed deer in this way, and therefore knew all about it. It was agreed, then, that upon the following night we should try the experiment.

"During the next day, Dick and I proceeded

in our preparations without saying anything to any one. It was our design to keep our night-hunt a secret, lest we might be unsuccessful, and get laughed at for our pains. On the other hand, should we succeed in killing a goodly number of long-tails, it would be time enough to let it be known how we had managed matters.

"We had little difficulty in keeping our designs to ourselves. Every one was busy with his own affairs, and took no heed of our maneuvers.

"Our chief difficulty lay in procuring a boat, but for the consideration of a few loads of powder, we at length borrowed an old canoe that belonged to one of the Flathead Indians—a sort of hanger-on of the post.

"This craft was simply a log of the cotton-wood, rudely hollowed out by means of an ax, and slightly rounded at the ends to produce the canoe-shape. It was that species of water-craft popularly known throughout Western America as a 'dug-out,' a phrase which explains itself. It was both old and rickety, but after a short inspection, Blue Dick declared it would do 'fust rate.'

"Our next move was to prepare our torch. For this we had to make an excursion to the neighboring hills, where we found the very material we wanted—the dry knots of the pitch-pine tree.

"A large segment of birch bark was then sought for and obtained, and our implements were complete.

"At twilight all was ready, and stepping into our dug-out, we paddled silently down-stream.

"As soon as we had got out of the neighborhood of the post, we lighted our torch. This was placed in a large frying-pan out upon the bow, and was in reality rather a fire of pine-knots than a torch. It blazed up brightly, throwing a glare over the surface of the stream and reflecting in red light every object upon both banks. We, on the other hand, were completely hidden from view by means of the birch-bark screen, which stood up between us and the torch.

"As soon as we were fairly under way, I yielded up the paddle to Dick who now assigned to himself the double office of guiding the dug-out and keeping the torch trimmed. I was to look to the shooting; so, placing my trusty rifle across my thighs, I sat alternately scanning both banks as we glided along.

"I shall never forget the romantic effect which was produced upon my mind during that wild excursion. The scenery of the river upon which we had launched our craft was at all times of a picturesque character; under the blaze of the pine-wood—its trees and rocks tinted with a reddish hue, while the rippling flood below ran like molten gold—the effect was heightened to a degree of sublimity which could not have failed to impress the duldest imagination. It was the autumn season, too, and the foliage, which had not yet commenced falling, had assumed those rich varied tints so characteristic of the American *sylvia*—various hues of green and golden, and yellow and deep red were exhibited upon the luxuriant frondage that lined the banks of the stream, and here and there drooped like embroidered curtains down to the water's edge. It was a scene of that wild beauty, that picturesque sublimity, which carries one to the contemplation of its Creator.

"Yonder!" muttered a voice, that roused me from my reverie. It was Dick who spoke; and in the dark shadow of the birch-bark I could see one of his arms extended, and pointing to the right bank.

"My eyes followed the direction indicated; they soon rested upon two small objects, that from the darker back-ground of the foliage appeared bright and luminous. These objects were round, and close to each other; and at a glance I knew them to be the eyes of some animal, reflecting the light of our torch.

"My companion whispered me that they were the eyes of a deer. I took sight with my rifle, aiming as nearly as I could midway between the luminous spots. I pulled trigger, and my true piece cracked like a whip.

"The report was not loud enough to drown the noises that came back from the shore. There was a rustling of leaves, followed by a plunge, as of some body falling in the water.

"Dick turned the head of the dug-out, and paddled her up to the bank. The torch, blazing brightly, lit up the scene ahead of us, and our eyes were gratified by the sight of a fine buck, that had fallen dead into the river. He was about being drawn into the eddy of the current, but Dick prevented this, and, seizing him by the antlers, soon deposited him safely in the bottom of the dug out.

"Our craft was once more headed down-stream, and we scrutinized every winding of the banks in search of another pair of gleaming eyes. In less than half an hour these appeared, and we succeeded in killing a second long-tail—a doe—and dragged her also into the boat.

"Shortly after, a third was knocked over, which we found standing out in the river upon a small point of sand. This proved to be a

young spike-buck, his horns not having as yet branched off into antlers.

"About a quarter of a mile further down, a fourth deer was shot at, and missed, the dug-out having grazed suddenly against a rock just as I was pulling trigger, thus rendering my aim unsteady.

"I need hardly say that this sport was extremely exciting; and we had got many miles from the post, without thinking either of the distance or the fact that we should be under the disagreeable necessity of paddling the old Flat-head's canoe every inch of the way back again. Down-stream it was all plain sailing; and Dick's duty was light enough, as it consisted merely in keeping the dug-out head-foremost in the middle of the river. The current ran at the rate of three miles an hour, and therefore drifted us along with sufficient rapidity.

"The first thing that suggested a return of either of us, was the fact that our pine-knots had run out: Dick had just piled the last of them in the frying pan.

"At this moment, a noise sounded in our ears that caused us some feelings of alarm: it was the noise of falling water. It was not new to us, for, since leaving the post, we had passed the mouths of several small streams that debouched into one upon which we were, in most cases over a jumble of rocks, thus forming a series of noisy rapids. But that which we now heard was directly ahead of us, and must, thought we, be a rapid or fall of the stream itself; moreover, it sounded louder than any we had hitherto passed.

"We lost little time in conjectures. The first impulse of my companion, upon catching the sound, was to stop the progress of the dug-out, which in a few seconds he succeeded in doing; but by this time our torch had shown us that there was a sharp turning in the river, with a long reach of smooth water below. The cascade, therefore, could not be in our stream, but in some tributary that fell into it near the bend.

"On seeing this, Dick turned his paddle, and permitted the dug-out once more to float with the current.

"The next moment we passed the mouth of a good-sized creek, whose waters, having just leaped a fall of several feet, ran into the river, covered with white froth and bubbles. We could see the fall at a little distance, through the branches of the trees; and as we swept on, its foaming sheet reflected the light of our torch like shining metal.

"We had scarcely passed this point, when my attention was attracted by a pair of fiery orbs that glistened out of some low bushes upon the left bank of the river. I saw that they were the eyes of some animal, but what kind of animal I could not guess. I knew they were not the eyes of a deer. Their peculiar scintillation, their lesser size, the wide space between them—all convinced me they were not deer's eyes. Moreover, they moved at times, as if the head of the animal was carried about in irregular circles. This is never the case with the eyes of the deer, which either pass hurriedly from point to point, or remain with a fixed and steadfast gaze.

"I knew, therefore, it was no deer; but no matter what—it was some wild creature, and all such are alike the game of the prairie-hunter.

"I took aim, and pulled trigger. While doing so, I heard the voice of my companion warning me, as I thought, not to fire. I wondered at this admonition, but it was then too late to heed it, for it had been uttered almost simultaneously with the report of my rifle.

"I first looked to the bank, to witness the effect of my shot. To my great surprise, the eyes were still there, gleaming from the bushes as brightly as ever.

"Had I missed my aim? It is true, the voice of my companion had somewhat disconcerted me; but I still believed that my bullet must have sped truly, as it had been delivered with a good aim.

"As I turned to Dick for an explanation, a new sound fell upon my ears that explained all, at the same time causing me no slight feeling of alarm. It was a sound not unlike that sometimes uttered by terrified swine, but still louder and more threatening. I knew it well—I knew it was the snort of the grizzly bear!

"Of all American animals, the grizzly bear is the most to be dreaded. Armed or unarmed, man is no match for him, and even the courageous hunter of these parts shuns the encounter. This was why my companion had admonished me not to fire. I thought I had missed; it was not so. My bullet had hit and stung the fierce brute to madness; and a quick cracking among the bushes was immediately followed by a heavy plunge; the bear was in the water.

"Good heavens, he's after us!" cried Dick in accents of alarm, at the same time propelling the dug-out with all his might.

"It proved true enough that the bear was after us, and the very first plunge had brought his nose almost up to the side of the canoe. However, a few well-directed strokes of the paddle set us in quick motion, and we were soon gliding rapidly down-stream, followed by

the enraged animal, that every now and then uttered one of his fierce snorts.

"What rendered our situation a terrible one was, that we could not now see the bear, nor tell how far he might be from us. All to the rear of the canoe was of a pitchy darkness, in consequence of the screen of birch-bark. No object could be distinguished in that direction, and it was only by hearing him that we could tell he was still some yards off. The snorts, however, were more or less distinct, as heard amid the varying roar of the waterfall; and sometimes they seemed as if the snout from which they proceeded was close up to our stern.

"We knew that if he once laid his paw upon the canoe, we should either be sunk or compelled to leap out and swim for it. We knew, moreover, that such an event would be certain death to one of us at least.

"I need hardly affirm, that my companion used his paddle with all the energy of despair. I assisted him as much as was in my power with the butt-end of my gun, which was now empty. On account of the hurry and darkness, I had not attempted to reload it.

"We had shot down-stream for a hundred yards or so, and were about congratulating ourselves on the prospect of an escape from the bear, when a new object of dread presented itself to our terrified imaginations. This object was the sound of falling water; but not as before, coming from some tributary stream. No. It was a fall of the river upon which we were floating, and evidently only a very short distance below us!

"We were, in fact, within less than one hundred yards of it. Our excitement, in consequence of being pursued by the bear, as well as the fact that the sough of the cascade above still filled our ears, had prevented us from perceiving this new danger until we had approached it.

"A shout of terror and warning from my companion seemed the echo of one I had myself uttered. Both of us understood the peril of our situation, and both, without speaking another word, set about attempting to stop the boat.

"We paddled with all our strength—he with the oar, while I used the flat butt of my rifle. We had succeeded in bringing her to a sort of equilibrium, and were in hopes of being able to force her toward the bank, when all at once we heard a heavy object strike against the stern. At the same moment, the bow rose up into the air, and a number of the burning pine-knots fell back into the bottom of the canoe. They still continued to blaze; and their light now falling toward the stern, showed us a fearful object. The bear had seized hold of the dug-out, and his fierce head and long, curving claws were visible over the edge.

"Although the little craft danced about upon the water, and was likely to be turned keel upward, the animal showed no intention of relaxing his hold, but, on the contrary, seemed every moment mounting higher into the canoe.

"Our peril was now extreme. We knew it, and the knowledge half paralyzed us.

"Both of us started up, and for some moments half sat, half crouched, uncertain how to act. Should we use the paddles, and get the canoe ashore, it would only be to throw ourselves into the jaws of the bear. On the other hand, we could not remain as we were, for in a few seconds we should be drifted over the falls; and how high these were we knew not. We had never heard of them—they might be fifty feet, they might be a hundred! High enough they were, no doubt, to precipitate us into eternity.

"The prospect was appalling, and our thoughts ran rapidly. Quick action was required. I could think of no other than to lean sternward, and strike at the bear with my clubbed rifle, at the same time calling upon my companion to paddle for the shore. We preferred, under all circumstances, risking the chances of a land encounter with our grizzly antagonist.

"I had succeeded in keeping the bear out of the canoe by several well-planted blows upon the snout; and Dick was equally successful in forcing the dug-out nearer to the bank, when a sharp crack reached my ears, followed by a terrified cry from my companion.

"I glanced suddenly around to ascertain the cause of these demonstrations. Dick held in his hands a short, round stick, which I recognized as the shaft of the paddle. The blade had snapped off, and was floating away on the surface!

"We were now helpless. The *manège* of the canoe was no longer possible—over the falls we must go!

"We thought of leaping out, but it was too late. We were almost upon the edge, and the black current that bore our craft swiftly along would have carried our bodies with like velocity. We could not make a dozen strokes before we should be swept to the brink—it was too late.

"We both saw this, and each knew the feelings of the other, for we felt alike. Neither spoke, but, crouching down and holding the gunwales of the canoe, we awaited the awful moment.

"The bear seemed to have some apprehension as well as ourselves; for, instead of continuing his endeavors to climb into the canoe, he contented himself with holding fast to the stern, evidently under some alarm.

"The torch still blazed, and the canoe was catching fire—perhaps this it was that alarmed the bear.

"The last circumstance gave us at the moment but little concern; the greater danger eclipsed the less. We had hardly noticed it, when we felt that we were going over!

"The canoe shot outward as if propelled by some projectile force; then came a loud crash, as though we had dropped upon a hard rock. Water and spray and froth were dashed over our bodies; and the next moment, to our surprise as well as delight, we felt ourselves still alive, and seated in the canoe, which was floating gently in still, smooth water.

"It was quite dark, for the torch had been extinguished; but even in the darkness we could perceive the bear swimming and floundering near the boat. To our great satisfaction, we saw him heading for the shore, and widening the distance between himself and us with all the haste he could make. The unexpected precipitation over the falls had cooled his courage, if not his hostility.

"Dick and I headed the canoe, now half full of water to the opposite bank, which we contrived to reach by using the rifle and our hands for paddles. Here we made the little vessel fast to a tree, intending to leave it there, as we could not by any possibility get it back over the fall. Having hung our game out of reach of the wolves, we turned our faces up-stream, and, after a long and wearisome walk, succeeded in getting back to the post.

"Next morning a party went down for the venison, with the intention also of carrying the canoe back over the fall. The craft, however, was found to be so much injured, that it would not hang together during the portage, and was therefore abandoned. This was no pleasant matter to me, for it afterward cost me a considerable sum before I could square with the old Flathead for his worthless dug-out."

CHAPTER XVI.

OLD IKE AND THE GRIZZLY.

A—'s adventure ending in a grizzly bear story, drew the conversation upon that celebrated animal, and we listened to the many curious facts related about it, with more than usual interest.

The grizzly bear is omnivorous. Fish, flesh and fowl are eaten by him apparently with equal relish. He devours frogs, lizards and other reptiles.

He is fond of the larvæ of insects; these are often found in large quantities adhering to the under sides of decayed logs. To get at them the grizzly bear will roll over logs of such size and weight, as would try the strength of a yoke of oxen.

He can "root" like a hog, and will often plow up acres of prairie in search of the wapato and Indian turnip. Like the black bear he is fond of sweets; and the wild berries, consisting of many species of currant, gooseberry and service berry, are greedily gathered into his capacious maw.

He is too slow of foot to overtake either buffalo, elk or deer, though he sometimes comes upon these creatures unawares; and he will drag the largest buffalo to the earth, if he can only get his claws upon it.

Not unfrequently he robs the panther of his repast, and will drive a whole pack of wolves from the carrion they have just succeeded in killing.

Several attempts have been made to raise the young grizzlies, but these have all been abortive, the animals proving anything but agreeable pets. As soon as grown to a considerable size, their natural ferocity displays itself, and their dangerous qualities usually lead to the necessity for their destruction.

Of course, both Redwood and old Ike had met with more than one "b'ar scrape," and the latter was induced to relate one of his best.

"Strengers," began he, "when you scare up a grizzly, take my advice and give 'im a wide berth—that is, unless y'n'r' unkimmun well mounted. Ov' coorse, ef y'ur critter kin be depended upon, an' thur's no brush to tangle him, y'ur' safe enuf, as no grizzly as ever I see'd kin catch up wi' a hoss whur the ground's open an' clur. F'r' all that, whur the timmer's clost an' brushy an' the ground o' that sort whur a hoss mout stummel, it are allers the safest plan to let ole Eph'm slide. I've see'd a grizzly pull down as good a hoss as ever tracked a parairy, whur the critter hed got bothered in a thicket. The feller that straddled him only saved himself by hookin' on to the limb o' a tree. 'Twa'n't two minnits afore this child kim up—hearin' the rumpus. I hed good sight o' the b'ar an' sent a bullet—sixty to the pound—into the varmint's brain-pan, when he immediately cawaloped over. But 'twur too late to save the hoss. He wur rubbed out. The b'ar had half-skinned him, an' wur t'arin' at his guts. Waghi!"

Here the trapper unsheathed his clasp-knife, and having cut a "chunk" from a plug of real

"Jeemes River," stuck it into his cheek and proceeded with his narration.

"I reck'n I've see'd a putty consid'able o' the grizzly b'ar in my time. Ef them thur chaps who writes about all sorts o' varmint hed see'd as much o' the grizzly as I hev, they mout 'a' gi'n a hul book consarnin' the critter. Ef I hed a plug o' bacca for every grizzly I've rubbed out it 'ud keep my jaws waggin' for a good twel'month, I reckon. Ye—es, strengers, I've done some b'ar-killin'—I hev that, an' no mistake. Hain't I, Mark?"

"Wal, I wur a-gwine to tell you ov a sarcumstance that happened to this child about two yeern ago. It wur upon the Platte, atween Chimby Rock an' Laramie's.

"I wur engaged as hunter an' guide to a carryvan o' emigrant folks that wur on thur way to Oregon.

"Of coorse I all'ers kept ahead o' the carryvan, an' picked the place for thur camp.

"Wal, one arternoon I hed halted whur I see'd some timmer, which ur a sca'ce article about Chimby Rock. This, thort I, 'll do for campin'-ground, so I got down, pulled the saddle off o' my ole mar', an' staked the critter upon the best patch o' grass thet wur near, intendin' she shed hev her gut full afore the camp cattle kim up to bother her.

"I hed shot a black-tail buck, an' after kindlin' a fire, I roasted a griskin o' him, an' ate it.

"Still, thur wa'n't no sign o' the carryvan, an' arter hangin' the buck out o' reach o' the wolves, I tuk up my rifle an' set out to rackynoiter the neighborhood.

"My mar' bein' some'at jaded, I let her graze away, an' went afoot; an' that, let me tell you, strangers, ar' about the foolichest thing you kin do upon a parairy. I wa'n't long afore I proved it; but I'll kum to that by'mby.

"Wal, I fust cloom a consid'able hill, that gi'n me a view beyont. Thur wur a good-sized parairy layin' torst the south an' west. Thur wur no trees 'ceptin' an odd cottonwood hyur an' thur on the hillside.

"About a mile off I see'd a flock of goats—what you'd call antelopes, though goats they ur, as sure as goats is goats.

"Thur wa'n't no kiver near them—not a stick, for the parairy wur bar' as y'ur hand; so I see'd at a glimpse it 'ud be no use a-tryin' to approach, unless I tuk some plan to decoy the critters.

"I soon thort o' a dodge, an' went back to camp for my blanket, which wur a red Mackinaw. This I knew 'ud be the very thing to fool the goats with, an' I set out torst them.

"For the fust half-a-mile or so, I carried the blanket under my arm. Then I spread it out, an' walked behind it until I wur 'ithin three or four hundred yards o' the animals. I kept my eye on 'em through a hole in the blanket. They wur a-growin' scary, an' hed begun to run about in circles; so when I see'd this, I knew it wur time to stop.

"Wal, I hunkered down, an' still keepin' the blanket spread out afore me, I tung it upon a saplin' that I had brought from the camp. I then stuck the saplin' upright in the ground; an' mind ye, it wa'n't so easy to do that, for the parairy wur hard friz, an' I hed to dig a hole wi' my knife. Hows'adever, I got the thing rigged at last, an' the blanket hangin' up in front kivered my karkidge most complete. I hed nothin' more to do but wait till the goats shed come 'ithin range o' my shootin'-iron.

"Wal, that wa'n't long. As ye all know, them goats is a mighty curious animal—curious as women is—an' arter runnin' backw'ard, an' ferrard a bit, an' t'usin' up thur heads, an' sniffin' the air, one o' the fattest, a young prong horn buck, trotted up 'ithin fifty yards o' me.

"I jest squinted through the sights, an' afore that goat hed time to wink twice, I hit him plum atween the eyes. Ov' coorse he wur throwed in his tracks.

"Now, you'd 'a' jumped up, an' frightened the rest away—that's what you'd 'a' done, strengers. But you see I know'd better. I know'd that so long's the critters didn't see my karkidge, they wa'n't a-gwine to mind the crack o' the gun. So I laid still, in behopes to git a wheen more o' them.

"As I hed calc'lated at fust, they didn't run away, an' I slipped in my charge as brisk as possible. But jest as I wur raisin' to take sight on a doe that hed got near enough, the hull gang tuk scare, an' broke off as ef a pack of parairy wolves wur arter 'em.

"I wer clean puzzled at this, for I know'd I hedn't done anythin' to frighten 'em, but I wa'n't long afore I diskivered the cause o' the'r alarm. Jest then I heerd a snift like the coughin' o' a glandered hoss, and, turnin' suddintly 'round, I spied the biggest b'ar it hed ever been my luck to set eyes on. He wur comin' direct torst me, an' at that minnit wa'n't over twenty yards from whur I lay. I know'd at a glimp' he wur a grizzly!

"Tain't no use to say I wa'n't skeart; I wur skeart, an' mighty bad skeart, I tell ye.

"At fust, I thort o' jumpin' to my feet, an' makin' tracks; but a minnit o' reflexshun showed me that 'ud be o' little use. Thur wur a half o' mile o' clur parairy on every side o' me,

an' I know'd the grizzly k'd catch up afore I had made three hundred yards in any direction. I know'd, too, that ef I started the varmint 'ud be sart'in to foller. It war plain to see the b'ar meant mischief. I k'd tell that from the glint o' his eyes.

"Thur wa'n't no time to lose in thinkin' about it. The brute wur still comin' nearer; but I noticed that he wur a-gwine slower an' slower, every now an' ag'in risin' to his hind-feet, clawin' his nose, an' sniffin' the air.

"I see'd that it wur the red blanket that puzzled him; an' seein' this, I crep' closter behind it, an' catched as much o' my karkidge as it 'ud kiver.

"When the b'ar hed got 'ithin about ten yards o' the spot, he kim to a full stop, an' reared up as he hed did several times, with his belly full torst me. The sight wur too much for this niggur, who never afore had been bullied by eyther Injun or b'ar.

"Twur a beautiful shot, an' I k'd'n't help tryin' it, ef 't hed been my last; so I poked my rifle through the hole in the blanket, an' sent a bullet atween the varmint's ribs.

"That wur, perhaps, the foolichest an' wust shot this child ever made. Hed I not fired it, the b'ar mou't 'a' gone off, fear'd o' the blanket; but I did fire, an' my narves bein' excited, I made a bad shot.

"I had ta'en sight for the heart, an' I only hit the varmint's shoulder.

"Ov coorse, the b'ar bein' now wounded, bekim savage, and cared no longer for the blanket. He roared out like a bull, tore at the place whur I hed hit him, and then kim on as fast as his four legs 'ud carry him.

"Things looked squally. I throwed away my emp'y gun, an' drew my bowie, expectin' nothin' else than a regular stand-up tussle wi' the b'ar. I know'd it wur no use turnin' tail now; so I braced myself up for a desp'rate fight.

"But jest as the b'ar hed got 'ithin ten feet o' me, an idee suddintly kim into my head. I hed been to Santa Fe, among them yaller-bided Mexikins, whur I hed see'd two or three bull-fights. I hed see'd them mattydoors fling thur red cloaks over a bull's head, jest when you'd 'a' thort they wur a-gwine to be gored to pieces on the critter's horns.

"Jest then, I remembered thur trick; an' afore the b'ar c'd close on me, I grabbed the blanket, spreadin' it out as I tuk holt.

"Strangers, that wur a blanket an' no mistakel. It wur as fine a five-point Mackinaw as ever kivered the hump-ribs o' a nor'-west trader. I used to wear it Mexikin-fashion when it rained; an' in coorse, for that purpose, thur wur a hole in the middle to pass the head through.

"Wal, jest as the b'ar sprung at me, I flopped the blanket straight in his face. I see'd his snout a-passin' through the hole, but I see'd no more; for I feeled the critter's claws touchin' me, an' I lot go.

"Now, thunk I, wur my time fur a run. The blanket mou't blin' him a leetle, an' I mou't git some start.

"With this thort, I glid past the animal's rump, an' struck out over the parairy.

"The direction happened to be that that led torst the camp, half a mile off; but thur wur a tree nearer, on the side o' the hill. Ef I k'd reach that, I know'd I 'ud be safe enuf, as the grizzly b'ar it don't climb.

"For the fust hundred yards I never looked round; then I only squinted back, runnin' all the while.

"I k'd jest see that the b'ar appeared to be still a-tossin' the blanket, and not fur from whur we hed parted kump'ny.

"I thort this some'at odd; but I didn't stay to see what it meant till I hed put another hundred yards atween us. Then I half turned, an' tuk a good look; an' if you believe me, strangers, the sight I see'd thur 'ud 'a' made a Mormon larf. Although jest one minnit afore, I wur putty nigh skeart out o' my seven senses, that sight made me larf till I wur like to bring on a colic.

"Thur wur the b'ar wi' his head right a-through the blanket. One minnit, he 'ud rear up on his hind-feet, an' then the thing hung roun' him like a Mexikin greaser. The next minnit, he 'ud be down on all-fours, an' tryin' to foller me; an' then the Mackinaw 'ud trip him up, an' routin' like a mad buffalo. Jehosaphat! it wur the funniest sight this child ever see'd. Wagh!

"Wal, I watched the game awhile—only a leetle while, for I know'd that if the b'ar could git clur o' the rag he mou't still overtake me an' drive me to the tree. That I didn't want eyther, so I tuk to my heels ag'in, and soon reached camp.

"Thur I saddled my mar' an' then rid back to git my gun, an' perhaps to give ole Eph'm a fresh taste o' lead.

"When I clomb the hill ag'in the b'ar wur still out on the parairy, an' I c'd see that the blanket wur a-hanging around 'im. Howsum-dever, he wur makin' off torst the hills, thinkin', maybe, he'd hed enuf o' my kump'ny.

"I wa'n't a-gwine to let him off so easy, for the skear he hed gi'n me; besides, he wur trailin' my Mackinaw along wi' 'im. So I galluped

to whur my gun lay, an' havin' rammed home a ball, I then galluped arter ole grizzly.

"I soon overhauled him, an' he turned upon me as savagerous as ever. But this time, feelin' secure on the mar's back, my narves wur steadier, an' I shot the b'ar plum through the skull, which throwed him in his tracks wi' the blanket wropped about 'im.

"But sich a blanket as that wur then—ay, sich a blanket! I never see'd sich a blanket! Thur wa'n't a square foot o' it that wa'n't torn to raggles. Ah, strangers, you don't know what it are to lose a five-point Mackinaw; no, that you don't! Cuss the b'ar!"

CHAPTER XVII.

A BATTLE WITH GRIZZLY BEARS.

AN adventure with grizzly bears which had befallen the "captain" was next related. He had been traveling with a strange party—the "scalp-hunters"—in the mountains near Santa Fe, when they were overtaken by a sudden and heavy fall of snow that rendered further progress impossible. The canyon, a deep valley in which they had encamped, was difficult to get through at any time, but now the path, on account of the deep, soft snow, was rendered impassable. When morning broke they found themselves fairly "in the trap."

"Above and below, the valley was choked up with snow five fathoms deep. Vast fissures—barrancas—were filled with the drift, and it was perilous to attempt penetrating in either direction. Two men had already disappeared.

"On each side of our camp rose the walls of the canyon, almost vertical, to the height of a hundred feet. These we might have climbed had the weather been soft, for the rock was a trap formation, and offered numerous seams and ledges, but now there was a coating of ice and snow upon them that rendered the ascent impossible. The ground had been frozen hard before the snow came on, although it was now freezing no longer, and the snow would not bear our weight. All our efforts to get out of the valley proved idle, and we gave them over, yielding ourselves, in a kind of reckless despair, to wait for—we scarce knew what.

"For three days we sat shivering around the fires, now and then casting looks of gloomy inquiry around the sky. The same dull gray for an answer, mottled with flakes slanting earthward, for it still continued to snow. Not a bright spot cheered the aching eye.

"The little platform on which we rested—a space of two or three acres—was still free from the snow-drift, on account of its exposure to the wind. Straggling pines, stunted and leafless, grew over its surface, in all about fifty or sixty trees. From these we obtained our fires; but what were fires when we had no meat to cook upon them?

"We were now in the third day without food! Without food, though not absolutely without eating—the men had bolted their gun covers and the cat-skin flaps of their bullet-pouches, and were now seen—the last shift but one—stripping the *parfleche* from the soles of their mocassins!

"The women, wrapped in their *tilmas*, nestled closely in the embrace of father, brother, husband, and lover: for all these affections were present. The last string of *tasajo*, hitherto economized for their sake, had been parceled out to them in the morning. That was gone, and whence was their next morsel to come? At long intervals, '*Ay de mi! Dios de mi alma!*' were heard only in low murmurs, as some colder blast swept down the canyon. In the faces of those beautiful creatures might be read that uncomplaining patience—that high endurance—so characteristic of the Hispano-Mexican women.

"Even the stern men around them bore up with less fortitude. Rude oaths were muttered from time to time, and teeth ground together, with that strange, wild look that heralds insanity. Once or twice I fancied that I observed a look of still stranger, still wilder expression, when the black ring forms around the eye—when the muscles twitch and quiver along gaunt, famished jaws—when men gaze guilty-like at each other. Oh, God! it was fearful! The half-robber discipline, voluntary at the best, had vanished under the leveling-rod of a common suffering, and I trembled to think—

"It cl'ars a leetle, out tharawa!"

"It was the voice of the trapper, Garey, who had risen and stood pointing toward the east.

"In an instant we were all upon our feet, looking in the direction indicated. Sure enough, there was a break in the lead-colored sky—a yellowish streak, that widened out as we continued gazing—the flakes fell lighter and thinner, and in two hours more it had ceased snowing altogether.

"Half a dozen of us, shouldering our rifles, struck down the valley. We would make one more attempt to trample a road through the drift. It was a vain one. The snow was over our heads, and after struggling for two hours we had not gained above two hundred yards. Here we caught a glimpse of what lay before

us. As far as the eye could reach, it rested upon the same deep, impassable masses. Despair and hunger paralyzed our exertions, and, dropping off one by one, we returned to the camp.

"We fell down around the fires in sullen silence. Garey continued pacing back and forth, now glancing up at the sky, and at times kneeling down, and running his hand over the surface of the snow. At length he approached the fire, and in his slow, drawling manner remarked:

"It's a-gwine to friz, I reckon."

"Well, and if it does?" asked one of his comrades, without caring for an answer to the question.

"Wal, an' iv it does," repeated the trapper, "we'll walk out o' this hyar jug afore sun-up, an' upon a good hard trail, too."

"The expression of every face was changed as if by magic. Several leaped to their feet. Gode, the Canadian, skilled in snow-craft, ran to a bank, and drawing his hand along the combing, shouted back:

"C'est vrai; il gele; il gele!"

"A cold wind soon after set in, and cheered by the brightening prospect we began to think of the fires that, during our late moments of reckless indifference, had been almost suff'ed to burn out. The Delawares, seizing their tomahawks, commenced backing at the pines, while others dragged forward the fallen trees, lopping off their branches with the keen scalping-knife.

"At this moment a peculiar cry attracted our attention, and, looking around we perceived one of the Indians drop suddenly upon his knees, striking the ground with his hatchet.

"What is it? what is it?" shouted several voices, in almost as many languages.

"Yam-yam! yam-yam!" replied the Indian, still digging at the frozen ground.

"The Injun's right; it's a *man-root*!" said Garey, picking up some leaves which the Delaware had chopped off.

"I recognized a plant well known to the mountain-men—a rare, but wonderful convolvulus, the *Iponea leptophylla*. The name of '*man-root*' is given to it by the hunters from the similarity of its roots in shape, and sometimes in size to the body of a man. It is esculent, and serves to sustain human life.

"In an instant half a dozen men were upon their knees, chipping and hacking at the hard clay, but their hatchets glinted off as from the surface of a rock.

"Look hyar," cried Garey, "ye're only spoilin' yer tools. Cut down a wheen o' these pine saplin's and make a fire over him."

"The hint was instantly followed, and in a few minutes a dozen pieces of pine were piled upon the spot, and set on fire.

"We stood around the burning branches with eager anticipation. Should the root prove a 'full-grown man,' it would make a supper for our whole party; and with the cheering idea of supper, jokes were ventured upon—the first we had heard for some time—the hunters tickled with the novelty of unearthing the 'old man' ready roasted, and speculating whether he would prove a 'fat old boss.'

"A hollow crack sounded from above, like the breaking of a dead tree. We looked up. A large object—an animal—was whirling outward and downward from a ledge that projected half-way up the cliff. It an instant it struck the earth, head-foremost, with a loud 'bump,' and, bounding to the height of several feet, came back with a somersault on its legs, and stood firmly.

"An involuntary 'hurrah!' broke from the hunters, who all recognized, at a glance, the 'Carnero cimmaron,' or 'bighorn.' He had cleared the precipice at two leaps, alighting each time on his huge crescent-shaped horns.

"For a moment both parties—hunters and game—seemed equally taken by surprise, and stood eying each other in mute wonder. It was but for a moment. The men made a rush for their rifles, and the animal, recovering from his trance of astonishment, tossed back his horns, and bounded across the platform. In a dozen springs he had reached the selvedge of the snow, and plunged into its yielding bank; but, at the same instant, several rifles cracked, and the white wreath was crimsoned behind him. He still kept on, however, leaping and breaking through the drift.

"We struck into his track and followed with the eagerness of hungry wolves. We could tell by the numerous *gouls* that he was shedding his life-blood, and about fifty paces further on we found him dead.

"A shout apprised our companions of our success, and we had commenced dragging back the prize, when wild cries reached us from the platform—the yells of men, the screams of women, mingled with oaths and exclamations of terror!

"We ran on toward the entrance of the track. On reaching it a sight was before us that caused the stoutest to tremble. Hunters, Indians and women were running to and fro in frantic confusion, uttering their varied cries, and pointing upward. We looked in that direction—a row of fearful objects stood upon the brow of the cliff. We knew our enemy at a glance—the

dreaded monsters of the mountains—the grizzly bears!

"There were five of them—five in sight—there might be others in the background. Five were enough to destroy our whole party, caged as we were, and weakened by famine.

"They had reached the cliff in chase of the cimmaron, and hunger and disappointment were visible in their horrid aspects. Two of them had already crawled close to the scarp, and were pawing over and snuffing the air, as if searching for a place to descend. The other three reared themselves up on their hams, and commenced maneuvering with their forearms, in a human-like and comical pantomime!

"We were in no condition to relish this amusement. Every man hastened to arm himself, those who had emptied their rifles hurriedly reloading them.

"For your life don't!" cried Garey, catching at the gun of one of the hunters.

"The caution came too late; half-a-dozen bullets were already whistling upward.

"The effect was just what the trapper had anticipated. The bears, maddened by the bullets, which had harmed them no more than the pricking of as many pins, dropped to their all-fours again, and, with fierce growls, commenced descending the cliff.

"The scene of confusion was now at its height. Several of the men, less brave than their comrades, ran off to hide themselves in the snow, while others commenced climbing the low pine-trees!

"Cache the gals!" cried Garey. "Hyar, yer darned Spanish Greasers! if yer won't fight, hook on to the weemen a wheen o' yer, and tote them to the snow. Cowardly slinks—wagh!"

"See to them, doctor," I shouted to the German, who, I thought, might be best spared from the fight; and the next moment the doctor, assisted by several Mexicans, was hurrying the terrified girls toward the spot where we had left the cimmaron.

"Many of us knew that to hide, under the circumstances, would be worse than useless. The fierce but sagacious brutes would have discovered us one by one, and destroyed us in detail. 'They must be met and fought!' that was the word, and we resolved to carry it into execution.

"There were about a dozen of us who 'stood up to it'—all the Delawares and Shawanoes, with Garey and the mountain men.

"We kept firing at the bears as they ran along the ledges in their zigzag descent, but our rifles were out of order, our fingers were numbed with cold, and our nerves weakened with hunger. Our bullets drew blood from the hideous brutes, yet not a shot proved deadly. It only stung them into fiercer rage.

"It was a fearful moment when the last shot was fired, and still not an enemy the less. We flung away the guns, and, clutching the hatchets and hunting-knives, silently awaited our grizzly foes.

"We had taken our stand close to the rock. It was our design to have the first blow, as the animals, for the most part, came stern-foremost down the cliff. In this we were disappointed. On reaching a ledge some ten feet from the platform, the foremost bear halted, and, seeing our position hesitated to descend. The next moment his companions, maddened with wounds, came tumbling down upon the same ledge, and, with fierce growls, the five huge bodies were precipitated into our midst.

"Then came the desperate struggle, which I cannot describe—the shouts of the hunters, the wilder yells of our Indian allies, the hoarse worrying of the bears, the ringing of tomahawks from skulls like flint, the deep, dull 'thud' of the stabbing-knife, and now and then a groan, as the crescent claw tore up the clinging muscle. Oh God! it was a fearful scene!

"Over the platform bears and men went rolling and struggling, in the wild battle of life and death. Through the trees, and into the deep drift, staining the snow with their mingled blood! Here, two or three men were engaged with a single foe—there, some brave hunter stood battling alone. Several were sprawling upon the ground. Every moment, the bears were lessening the number of their assailants!

"I had been struck down at the commencement of the struggle. On regaining my feet, I saw the animal that had felled me hugging the prostrate body of a man.

"It was Gode. I leaned over the bear, clutching its shaggy skin. I did this to steady myself; I was weak and dizzy; so were we all. I struck with all my force, stabbing the animal on the ribs.

"Letting go the Frenchman, the bear turned suddenly and reared upon me. I endeavored to avoid the encounter, and ran backward, fending him off with my knife.

"All at once I came against the snow-drift, and fell over on my back. Next moment the heavy body was precipitated upon me, the sharp claws pierced deep into my shoulder—I inhaled the monster's fetid breath; and striking wildly with my right arm, still free, we rolled over and over in the snow.

"I was blinded by the dry drift. I felt my-

self growing weaker and weaker; it was the loss of blood. I shouted—a despairing shout—but it could not have been heard at ten paces' distance. Then there was a strange hissing sound in my ears—a bright light flashed across my eyes; a burning object passed over my face, scorching the skin; there was a smell as of singeing hair; I could hear voices, mixed with the roars of my adversary; and all at once the claws were drawn out of my flesh, the weight was lifted from my breast, and I was alone!

"I rose to my feet, and rubbing the snow out of my eyes, looked around. I could see no one. I was in a deep hollow made by our struggles, but I was alone!

"The snow all around me was dyed to a crimson; but what had become of my terrible antagonist? Who had rescued me from his deadly embrace?"

"I staggered forward to the open ground. Here a new scene met my gaze; a strange-looking man was running across the platform, with a huge firebrand—the bole of a burning pine-tree—which he waved in the air. He was chasing one of the bears, that, growling with rage and pain, was making every effort to reach the cliffs. Two others were already half-way up, and evidently clambering with great difficulty, as the blood dripped back from their wounded flanks.

"The bear that was pursued soon took to the rocks, and, urged by the red brand scorching his shaggy hams, was soon beyond the reach of his pursuer. The latter now made toward a fourth, that was still battling with two or three weak antagonists. This one was 'routed' in a twinkling, and with yells of terror followed his comrades up the bluff. The strange man looked around for the fifth. It had disappeared. Prostrate, wounded men were strewn over the ground, but the bear was nowhere to be seen. He had doubtless escaped through the snow.

"I was still wondering who was the hero of the firebrand, and where he had come from. I have said he was a strange-looking man. He was so—and like no one of our party that I could think of. His head was bald—no, not bald, but naked—there was not a hair upon it, crown or sides, and it glistened in the clear light like polished ivory. I was puzzled beyond expression, when a man—Garey—who had been felled upon the platform by a blow from one of the bears, suddenly sprung to his feet, exclaiming:

"Go it, Doc! Three chyars for the doctor!"

"To my astonishment, I now recognized the features of that individual, the absence of whose brown locks had produced such a metamorphosis as, I believe, was never effected by means of borrowed hair.

"Here's your scalp, Doc," cried Garey, running up with the wig; 'by the livin' thunder! yer saved us all,' and the hunter seized the German in his wild embrace.

"Wounded men were all around, and commenced crawling together. But where was the fifth of the bears? Four only had escaped by the cliff.

"Yonder he goes!" cried a voice, as a light spray, rising above the snow-wreath, showed that some animal was struggling through the drift.

"Several commenced loading their rifles, intending to follow, and, if possible, secure him. The doctor armed himself with a fresh pine; but before these arrangements were completed, a strange cry came from the spot, that caused our blood to run cold again. The Indians leaped to their feet, and seizing their tomahawks, rushed to the gap. They knew the meaning of that cry—it was the death-yell of their tribe!

"They entered the road that we had trampled down in the morning, followed by those who had loaded their guns. We watched them from the platform with anxious expectation, but before they had reached the spot, we could see that the 'stoor' was slowly settling down. It was plain that the struggle had ended.

"We still stood waiting in breathless silence, and watching the floating spray that noted their progress through the drift. At length they had reached the scene of the struggle. There was an ominous stillness, that lasted for a moment, and then the Indian's fate was announced in the sad, wild note that came wailing up the valley. It was the dirge of a Shawano warrior.

"They had found their brave comrade dead, with his scalping knife buried in the heart of his terrible antagonist!

"It was a costly supper, that bear-meat, but, perhaps, the sacrifice had saved many lives. We would keep the 'cimmaron' for to-morrow; next day, the man-root; and the next—what next? Perhaps—the man!

"Fortunately, we were not driven to this extremity. The frost had again set in, and the surface of the snow, previously moistened by the sun and rain, soon became caked into ice strong enough to bear us, and upon its firm crust we escaped out of the perilous pass, and gained the warmer region of the plains in safety."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SWANS OF AMERICA.

IN our journey we had kept far enough to the north to avoid the difficult route of the Ozark Hills; and we at length encamped upon the Marais de Cygnes, a branch of the Osage River. Beyond this we expected to fall in with the buffalo, and of course we were full of pleasant anticipation. Near the point where we had pitched our camp, the banks of the river were marshy, with here and there small lakes of stagnant water. In these a large number of swans, with wild geese and other aquatic birds, were swimming and feeding.

Of course our guns were put in requisition, and we succeeded in killing a brace of swans, with a gray goose, and a pair of ducks. The swans were very large ones—of the Trumpeter species—and one of them was cooked for supper. It was in excellent condition, and furnished a meal for the whole of our party. The other swan, with the goose and ducks, were stowed away for another occasion.

While "discussing" the flesh of this great and noble bird, we also discussed many of the points in its natural history.

"White as a swan" is a simile old as language itself. It would, no doubt, puzzle an Australian, used to look upon these beautiful and stately birds as being of a very different complexion. The simile holds good, however, with the North American species, all three of which—for there are three of them—are almost snow-white.

We need not describe the form or general appearance of the swan. These are familiar to every one. The long, upright and gracefully-curving neck; the finely-molded breast, the upward-tending tail-tip, the light "dip," and easy progression through the water, are points that everybody has observed, admired, and remembered. These are common to all birds of the genus *Cygnus*, and are therefore not peculiar to the swans of America.

Many people fancy there are but two kinds of swans—the white and black. It is not long since the black ones have been introduced to general notoriety, as well as to general admiration. But there are many distinct species besides—species differing from each other in size, voice, and other peculiarities. In Europe alone, there are four native swans, specifically distinct.

It was long believed that the common American swan was identical with the common European species, so well known in England. It is now ascertained, however, not only that these two are specifically distinct, but that in North America there exist two other species. These are the Trumpeter and the small swan of Bewick, also an inhabitant of European countries.

The common American species is of a pure white, with black bill, legs, and feet. A slight tinge of brownish red is found on some individuals on the crown of the head, and a small patch of orange-yellow extends from the angles of the mouth to the eye. On the base of the bill is a fleshy tubercle or knob, and the upper mandible is curved at the tip.

The young of this species are of a bluish-gray color, with more of the brown-red tinge upon the head. The naked yellow patch, extending from the angles of the mouth to the eye, in the young birds, is covered with feathers, and their bills are flesh-colored. This description answers in every respect for the swan of Bewick; but the latter species is only three-fourths the size of the former; and, besides, it has only eighteen tail feathers, while the American swan has twenty. Their note is also entirely unlike.

The "Trumpeter" is different from either. He is the largest, being frequently met with of nearly six feet in length, while the common swan rarely exceeds five. The bill of the Trumpeter is not tuberculated; and the yellow patch under the eye is wanting. The bill, legs, and feet are entirely black. All the rest is white, with the exception of the head, which is usually tinged with chestnut or red-brown. When young, he is of a grayish white, with a yellow mixture, and the head of deeper red-brown. His tail feathers are twenty-four in number; but there is a material difference between him and his congeners in the arrangement of the windpipe. In the Trumpeter this enters a protuberance that stands out on the dorsal aspect of the sternum, which is wanting in both the other kinds. It may be that this arrangement has something to do with his peculiar note, which differs altogether from that of the others. It is much fuller and louder, and at a distance bears a considerable resemblance to the trumpet or French horn. Hence the trivial name by which this species is known to the hunters.

All the American swans are migratory—that is, they pass from north to south every autumn, and back again from south to north in the beginning of spring.

The Trumpeters seek the north at the breaking up of the ice. Sometimes they arrive at a point in their journey where this has not taken place. In such cases they fly back again until they reach some river or lake from which the ice has disappeared, where they remain a few days, and wait the opening of the waters fur-

ther north. When they are thus retarded and sent back, it is always in consequence of some unusual and unseasonable weather.

The swans go northward to breed. Why they do so is a mystery. Perhaps they feel more secure in the inhospitable wastes that lie within the Arctic circle. The Trumpeters breed as far south as latitude 61°, but most of them retire within the frigid zone.

The small swans do not nest so far south, but pursue their course still onward to the Polar Sea. Here they build immense nests by raising heaps of peat moss, six feet in length by four in width, and two feet high. In the top of these heaps is situated the nest, which consists of a cavity a foot deep and a foot and a half in diameter.

The trumpeters and American swans build in marshes and the islands of lakes. Where the muskrat abounds, his dome-shaped dwelling—at that season, of course, deserted—serves often as the breeding-place both for the swans and wild geese. On the top of this structure, isolated in the midst of great marshes, these birds are secure from all their enemies—the eagle excepted.

The eggs of the trumpeter are very large, one of them being enough to make a good meal for a man. The eggs of the American species are smaller and of a greenish appearance, while those of the Bewick swan are still smaller and of a brownish white color, with a slight clouding of darker hue.

Six or seven eggs is the usual "setting." The cygnets, when half or full grown, are esteemed good eating, and are much sought after by the hunters and Indians of the fur countries.

When the cygnets are full grown, and the frost makes its appearance upon the lakes and rivers of the hyperborean regions, the swans begin to shift southward. They do not migrate directly, as in the spring, but take more time on their journey, and remain longer in the countries through which they pass. This no doubt arises from the fact that a different motive or instinct now urges them. In the spring they are under the impulse of philoprogenitiveness. Now they range from lake to lake and stream to stream in search only of food. Again, as in the spring, the trumpeters lead the van—winging their way to the great lakes, and afterward along the Atlantic coast, and by the line of the Mississippi, to the marshy shores of the Mexican Sea.

It may be remarked that this last-mentioned species—the trumpeter—is rare upon the Atlantic coast, where the common swan is seen in greatest plenty. Again, the trumpeter does not appear on the Pacific or by the Colombia River, where the common swan is met with, but the latter is there outnumbered by the small species in the ratio of five to one. This last again, is not known in the fur countries of the interior, where the trumpeter exists in greatest numbers. Indeed, the skins of the trumpeters are those which are mostly exported by the Hudson's Bay Company, and which form an important article of their commerce.

The swan is eagerly hunted by the Indians who inhabit the fur countries. Its skin brings a good price from the traders, and its quills are valuable. Besides, the flesh is a consideration with these people, whose life, it must be borne in mind, is one continuous struggle for food, and who, for one-half the year, live upon the very verge of starvation.

The swan, therefore, being a bird that weighs between twenty and thirty pounds, ranks among large game, and is hunted with proportionate ardor. Every art the Indian can devise is made use of to circumvent these great birds, and snares, traps and decoys of all kinds are employed in the pursuit.

But the swans are among the shyest of God's creatures. They fly so rapidly, unless when beating against the wind, that it requires a practiced shot to hit them on the wing. Even when moulting their feathers, or when young, they can escape—fluttering over the surface of the water faster than a canoe can be paddled.

The most usual method of hunting them is by snares. These are set in the following manner:

A lake or river is chosen where it is known the swans are in the habit of resting for some time on their migration southward—for this is the principal season of swan-catching.

Some time before the birds make their appearance a number of wicker hedges are constructed, running perpendicularly out from the bank, and at the distance of a few yards from each other. In the spaces between, as well as in openings in the fences themselves, snares are set. These snares are made of the intestines of the deer, twisted into a round shape, and looped. They are placed so that several snares may embrace the opening, and the swans cannot pass through without being caught.

The snare is fastened to a stake, driven into the mud with sufficient firmness to hold the bird when caught and struggling. That the snare may not be blown out of its proper place by the wind, or carried astray by the current, it is attached to the wattles of the hedge by some strands of grass. These, of course, are easily

broken, and give way the moment a bird presses against the loop.

The fences or wattle-hedges are always constructed projecting out from the shore—for it is known that the swans must keep close into the land while feeding. Whenever a river or lake is sufficiently shallow to make it possible to drive in stakes, the hedges are continued across it from one side to the other.

Swans are also snared upon their nests. When a nest is found, the snare is set so as to catch the bird upon her return to the eggs. These birds, like many others, have the habit of entering the nest on one side and going out by the other, and it is upon the entrance side that the snare is set.

The Indians have a belief that if the hands of the person setting the snare be not clean, the bird will not approach it, but rather desert her eggs, even though she may have been hatching them for some time.

It is, indeed, true that this is a habit of many birds, and may be so of the wild swan. Certain it is that the nest is always reconnoitered by the returning bird with great caution, and any irregularity appearing about it will render her extremely shy of approaching it.

Swans are shot, like other birds, by "approaching" them under cover. It requires very large shot to kill them—the same that is used for deer, and known throughout America as "buck-shot." In England this size of shot is termed "swan-shot."

It is difficult to get within range of the wild swan. He is by nature a shy bird, and his long neck enables him to see over the sedge that surrounds him. Where there happens to be no cover—and this is generally the case where he haunts—it is impossible to approach him.

Sometimes the hunter floats down upon him with his canoe hidden by a garniture of reeds and bushes. At other times he gets near enough in the disguise of a deer or other quadruped—for the swan, like most wild birds, is less afraid of the lower animals than of man.

During the spring migration, when the swan is moving northward, the hunter, hidden under some rock, bank, or tree, frequently lures him from his high flight by the imitation of his well-known "hoop." This does not succeed so well in the autumn.

When the swans arrive prematurely on their spring journey, they resort sometimes in considerable flocks to the springs and waterfalls, all other places being then ice-bound. At this time the hunters, concealing themselves in the neighborhood, obtain the desired proximity, and deal destruction with their guns.

A—related an account of a swan hunt by torchlight, which he had made some years before.

"I was staying some days," said he, "at a remote settlement upon one of the streams that run into the Red River of the North. It was in the autumn season, and the trumpeter swans had arrived in the neighborhood on their annual migration to the south. I had been out several times after them with my gun, but was unable to get a shot at them in consequence of their shyness. I had adopted every expedient I could think of—calls, disguises and decoys—but all to no purpose. I resolved, at length, to try them by torch-light.

"It so happened that none of the hunters at the settlement had ever practiced this method; but as most of them had succeeded, by some means or other, in decoying and capturing several swans by other means, my hunter pride was touched, and I was most anxious to show that I could kill swans as well as they. I had never seen swans shot by torch-light, but I had employed the plan for killing deer, as you already know, and I was determined to make a trial of it upon the swans.

"I set secretly about it, resolved to steal a march upon my neighbors, if possible. My servant alone was admitted into my confidence, and we proceeded to make the necessary arrangements.

"These were precisely similar to those already described in my hunt of the long-tails, except that the canoe, instead of being a 'dug-out,' was a light craft of birch bark, such as are in use among the Chippewas and other Indians of the northern countries. The canoe was obtained from a settler, and filled with torchwood and other necessary articles, but these were clandestinely put on board.

"I was now ready, and a dark night was all that was wanted to enable me to carry out my plan.

"Fortunately I soon obtained this to my heart's satisfaction. A night arrived as dark as Erebus, and with my servant using the paddle, we pushed out and shot swiftly down-stream.

"As soon as we had cleared the 'settlement,' we lit our pine-knots in the frying-pan. The blaze refracted from the concave and blackened surface of the bark, cast a brilliant light over the semicircle ahead of us, at the same time that we, behind the screen of birch-bark, were hid in utter darkness. I had heard that the swans, instead of being frightened by torch-light, only became amazed, and even at times curious enough to approach it, just as the deer and some other animals do. This proved to

be correct, as we had very soon a practical illustration of it.

"We had not gone a mile down the river when we observed several white objects within the circle of our light; and paddling a little nearer, we saw that they were swans. We could distinguish their long, upright necks, and saw that they had given up feeding, and were gazing with wonder at the odd object that was approaching them.

"There were five of them in the flock, and I directed my servant to paddle toward that which seemed nearest, and to use his oar with as much silence as possible. At the same time I looked to the caps of my double-barreled gun.

"The swans for a time remained perfectly motionless, sitting high in the water, with their long necks raised far above the surface. They appeared to be more affected by surprise than fear.

"When we had got within about a hundred yards of them, I saw that they began to move about and close in to one another; at the same time was heard proceeding from them a strange sound resembling very much the whistle of the fallow-deer. I had heard of the singing of the swan, as a prelude to its death, and I hoped that which now reached my ears was a similar foreboding.

"In order to make it so, I leaned forward, leveled my double-barrel—both barrels being cocked—and waited the moment.

"The birds had 'clumped' together, until their long serpent-like necks crossed each other. A few more noiseless strokes of the paddle brought me within reach, and aiming for the heads of three that 'lined,' I pulled both triggers at once.

"The immense recoil flung me back, and the smoke for a moment prevented us from seeing the effect.

"As soon as it had been wafted aside, our eyes were feasted by the sight of two large white objects floating down the current, while a third, evidently wounded, struggled along the surface, and beating the water into foam with its broad wings.

"The remaining two had risen high into the air, and were heard uttering their loud trumpet-notes as they winged their flight through the dark heavens.

"We soon bagged our game, both dead and wounded, and saw that they were a large 'gander' and two young birds.

"It was a successful beginning, and having replenished our torch, we continued to float downward in search of more. Half a mile further on, we came in sight of three others, one of which we succeeded in killing.

"Another 'spell' of paddling brought us to a third flock, out of which I got one for each barrel of my gun; and a short distance below I succeeded in killing a pair of the gray wild geese.

"In this way we kept down the river for at least ten miles I should think, killing both swans and geese as we went. Indeed, the novelty of the thing, the wild scenery through which we passed—rendered more wild and picturesque by the glare of the torch—and the excitement of success, all combined to render the sport most attractive; and but that our 'pine-knots' had run out, I would have continued it until morning.

"The failure of these at length brought our shooting to a termination, and we were compelled to put about, and undertake the much less pleasant, and much more laborious task, of paddling up-stream. The consciousness, however, of having performed a great feat—in the language of the Canadian hunters, a grand 'coup' made the labor seem more light, and we soon arrived at the settlement, and next morning triumphantly paraded our game-bag in front of our 'lodge.'

"Its contents were twelve trumpeter swans, besides three of the 'hoopers.' We had also a pair of Canada geese; a snow-goose, and three brant,—these last being the produce of a single shot.

"The hunters of the settlement were quite envious, and could not understand what means I had employed to get up such a 'game-bag.' I intended to have kept that for some time a secret; but the frying-pan and the piece of blackened bark were found, and these betrayed my stratagem; so that on the night after, a dozen canoes, with torches at their bows, might have been seen floating down the waters of the stream."

CHAPTER XIX.

HUNTING THE MOOSE.

WHILE crossing the marshy bottom through which our road led, a singular hoof-track was observed in the mud. Some were of opinion that it was a track of the great moose-deer, but the hunter-naturalist, better informed, scouted the idea—declaring that moose never ranged so far to the south. It was no doubt a very large elk that had made the track, and to this conclusion all at length came.

The great moose-deer, however, was an interesting theme, and we rode along conversing upon it.

The moose is the largest of the deer kind. The male is ordinarily as large as a mule; specimens have been killed of still greater dimensions. One that has been measured stood seventeen hands, and weighed 1200 lbs.; it was consequently larger than most horses. The females are considerably smaller than the males.

The color of the moose, like that of other animals of the deer kind, varies with the season; it varies also with the sex. The male is tawny-brown over the back, sides, head and thighs; this changes to a darker hue in winter, and in very old animals it is nearly black; hence the name "black elk," which is given in some districts to the moose. The under parts of the body are light-colored, with a tinge of yellow or soiled white.

The female is of a sandy-brown color above, and beneath almost white. The calves are sandy brown, but never spotted, as are the fawns of the common deer.

The moose is no other than the elk of Northern Europe; but the elk of America is altogether a different animal. These two species may be mistaken for each other, in the season when their antlers are young, or in the velvet; then they are not unlike to a superficial observer. But the animals are rarely confounded—only the names. The American elk is not found indigenous in the eastern hemisphere, although he is the ornament of many a lordly park.

The identity of the moose with the European elk is a fact that leads to curious considerations. A similar identity exists between the caribou of Canada and the reindeer of Northern Europe. So also with the polar bear of both hemispheres, the arctic fox, and several other animals. Hence we infer, that there existed at some period either a land connection or some other means of communication, between the northern parts of both continents.

Besides being the largest, the moose is certainly the most ungraceful of the deer family. His head is long, out of all proportion; so, too, are his legs—while his neck is short in an inverse ratio. His ears are nearly a foot in length, asinine, broad, and slouching; his eyes are small, and his muzzle square, with a deep sulcus in the middle, which gives it the appearance of being bifid. The upper lip overhangs the under by several inches, and is highly prehensile. A long tuft of coarse hair grows out of an excrescence on the throat, in the angle between the head and neck. This tuft is observed both in the male and female, though only when fully grown. In the young, the excrescence is naked.

An erect mane, somewhat resembling that of a cropped Shetland pony, runs from the base of the horns over the withers, and some way down the back. This adds to the stiff and ungainly appearance of the animal.

The horns of the moose are a striking characteristic; they are palmated or flattened out like shovels, while along the edge rise the points or antlers. The width from horn to horn at their tops is often more than four feet, and the breadth of a single one, antlers included, is frequently above thirty inches. A single pair has been known to weigh as much as 60 lbs. avoirdupois.

Of course, this stupendous head-dress gives the moose quite an imposing appearance; and it is one of the wonders of the naturalist what can be its object.

The horns are found only on the males, and attain their full size only when these have reached their seventh year. In the yearlings appear two knobs, about an inch in length; in two-year-olds, these knobs have become spikes a foot high; in the third year they begin to palmate, and antlers rise along their edges—and so on, until the seventh year, when they become fully developed. They are annually caducous, however, as with the common deer, so that these immense appendages are the growth of a few weeks.

The haunts and habits of the moose differ materially from those of other deer. He cannot browse upon level ground without kneeling or wincing his legs to a great extent; this difficulty arises from the extreme length of his legs and the shortness of his neck. He can do better upon the sides of steep hills, and he is often seen in such places grazing upward.

Grass, however, is not his favorite food—he prefers the twigs and leaves of trees—such as birch, willow, and maple. There is one species of the last of which he is extremely fond; it is that known as striped maple, or "moose-wood." He peels off the bark from old trees of this sort, and feeds upon it, as well as upon several species of mosses with which the arctic regions abound. It will be seen that in these respects he resembles the giraffe—he may be regarded as the giraffe of the frigid zone.

The moose loves the forest; he is rarely found in the open ground—on the prairie, never.

On open, level ground he is easily overtaken by the hunter, as he makes but a poor run in such a situation. His feet are tender, and his wind short; besides, as we have already said, he cannot browse there without great inconvenience. He keeps in the thick forest and the impenetrable swamp, where he finds the food most to his liking.

In summer, he takes to the water, wading into lakes and rivers, and frequently swimming across both. This habit renders him at that season an easy prey to his enemies, the Indian hunters, for in the water he is easily killed. Nevertheless, he loves to bury himself in the water, because along the shores of lakes and margins of rivers, he finds the tall reed-grass, and the pond-lily—the latter a particular favorite with him. In this way, too, he rids himself of the biting gnats and stinging mosquitoes that swarm there; and also cools his blood, fevered by parasites, larvae, and the hot sun.

The female moose produces one, two, and sometimes three calves at a birth; this is in April or May. The period of gestation is nine months.

During the summer, they are seen in families—that is, a bull, a cow, and two calves. Sometimes the group includes three or four cows; but this is rare.

Occasionally, when the winter comes on, several of these family-parties unite and form herds of many individuals. When the snow is deep, one of these herds will tread down a space of several acres, in which they will be found browsing on the bark and twigs of the trees. A place of this sort is termed by the hunters a "moose-yard;" and in such a situation the animals become an easy prey. They are shot down on the spot, and those that attempt to escape through the deep snow are overtaken and brought to bay by dogs. This can only happen, however, when the snow is deep and crusted with frost; otherwise, the hunters and their dogs, as well as their heavier game, would sink in it. When the snow is of old standing, it becomes icy on the surface through the heat of the sun, rain, and frost; then it will bear the hunter, but not the deer. The latter break through it, and as these animals are tender-hoofed, they are lacerated at every jump. They soon feel pain, give up the attempt to escape, and come to bay.

It is dangerous for dogs to approach them when in this mood. They strike with the hoofs of their forefeet, a single blow of which often knocks the breath out of the stoutest deerhound. There are many records of hunters having been sacrificed in a similar manner.

Where the moose are plentiful, the Indians hunt them by pounding. This is done simply by inclosing a large tract of woods, with a funnel-shaped entrance leading into the inclosure. The wide mouth of the entrance embraces a path which the deer habitually take; upon this they are driven by the Indians; deployed in a wide curve, until they enter the funnel, and the pound itself. Here there are nooses set, in which many are snared, while others are shot down by the hunters who follow. This method is more frequently employed with the caribou, which are much smaller, and more gregarious than the moose-deer.

We have already said that the moose are easily captured in summer, when they resort to the lakes and rivers to wade and swim. The biting of gnats and mosquitoes renders them less fearful of the approach of man. The Indians then attack them in their canoes, and either shoot or spear them while paddling alongside.

They are much less dangerous to assail in this way than the elk or even the common deer, as the latter, when brought in contact with the frail birch-canoe, often kick up in such a manner as to upset it, or break a hole through its side. On the contrary, the moose is frequently caught by the antlers while swimming, and in this way carried alongside without either difficulty or danger.

Although in such situations these huge creatures are easily captured, it is far otherwise as a general rule. Indeed, few animals are more shy than the moose. Its sight is acute; so, too, with its sense of smell; but that organ in which it chiefly confides is the ear. It can hear the slightest noise to a great distance; and the hunter's foot among the dead leaves, or upon the frozen snow-crust, often betrays him long before he can creep within range. They are, however, frequently killed by the solitary hunter stealing upon them, or "approaching," as it is termed. To do this, it is absolutely necessary to keep to leeward of them, else the wind would carry to their quick ears even the cautious tread of the Indian hunter.

There is one other method of hunting the moose often practiced by the Indians—that is, trailing them with rackets, or snow-shoes, and running them down. As I had partaken of this sport I was able to give an account of it to my companions.

"In the winter of 18—, I had occasion to visit a friend who lived in the northern part of the State of Maine. My friend was a backwoods settler; dwelt in a comfortable log-house; raised corn, cattle, and hogs; and for the rest, amused himself occasionally with a hunt in the neighboring woods. This he could do without going far from home, as the great forests of pine, birch, and maple trees on all sides surrounded his solitary clearing, and his nearest neighbor was about twenty miles off. Literally, my friend lived in the woods, and the sports of the chase were with him almost a necessity; at all events, they were an every-day occupation.

"Up to the time of my visit, I had never seen a moose, except in museums. I had never been so far north upon the American continent; and it must be remembered, that the geographical range of the moose is confined altogether to the cold countries. It is only in the extreme northern parts of the United States that he appears at all. Canada, with the vast territories of the Hudson's Bay Company, even to the shores of the Arctic Sea, is the proper *habitat* of this animal.

"I was familiar with bears; cougars I had killed; elk and fallow-deer I had driven; 'coons and 'possums I had treed; in short, I had been on hunting terms with almost every game in America except the moose. I was most eager, therefore, to have a shot at one of these creatures, and I well remember the delight I experienced when my friend informed me there were moose in the adjacent woods.

"On the day after my arrival, we set forth in search of them, each armed with a hunting-knife and a heavy deer gun. We went afoot; we could not go otherwise, as the snow lay to the depth of a yard, and a horse would have plunged through it with difficulty. It was an old snow, moreover, thickly crusted, and would have maimed our horses in a few minutes. We, with our broad rackets, could easily skim along without sinking below the surface.

"I know not whether you have ever seen a pair of rackets, or Indian snow-shoes, but their description is easy. You have seen the rackets used in ball-play. Well, now, fancy a hoop, not of circular form, but forced into an elongated, pointed ellipse, very much after the shape of the impression that a capsized boat would make in snow; fancy this about three feet long, and a foot across at its widest, closely netted over with gut or deer-thong, with bars in the middle to rest the foot upon, and a small hole to allow play to the toes, and you will have some idea of a snow-shoe. Two of these—right and left—make a pair. They are simply strapped on to your boots, and then their broad surface sustains you, even when the snow is comparatively soft, but perfectly when it is frozen.

"Thus equipped, my friend and I set out afoot, followed by a couple of stout deer-hounds. We made directly for a part of the woods where it was known to my friend that the striped maple grew in great plenty. It has been stated already, that the moose are particularly fond of these trees, and there we would be most likely to fall in with them.

"After we had shuffled about two miles over the snow, my friend and I entered a tract of heavy timber, where the striped maple formed the underwood. It did not grow regularly, but in copses or small thickets. We had already started some small game, but declined following it as we were bent only on a moose-chase.

"We soon fell in with signs that indicated the propinquity of the animals we were in search of. In several of the thickets, the maples were stripped of their twigs and bark, but this had been done previous to the falling of the snow. As yet, there were no tracks; we were not long, however, before this welcome indication was met with. On crossing a glade where there was but little snow, the prints of a great split hoof were seen, which my friend at once pronounced to be those of the moose.

"We followed this trail for some distance, until it led into deeper snow and a more retired part of the forest. The tracks were evidently fresh ones, and those, as my friend asserted, of an old bull.

"Half a mile further on they were joined by others, and the trail became a broken path through the deep snow, as if it had been made by farm cattle following each other in single file. Four moose had passed, as my friend—skilled in woodcraft—confidently asserted, although I could not have told that from the appearance of the trail. He went still further in his reckoning, and stated that they were a bull, a cow, and two nine-months' calves.

"You shall soon see," he said, perceiving that I was somewhat incredulous. "Look here!" he continued, bending down and pressing the broken snow with his fingers; "they are quite fresh—made within the hour. Speak low—the cattle can't be far off. Yonder, as I live! yonder they are—hush!"

"My friend, as he spoke, pointed to a thicket about three hundred yards distant; I looked in that direction, but at first could perceive nothing more than the thickly-growing branches of the maples.

"After a moment, however, I could trace among the twigs the long dark outlines of a strange animal's back, with a huge pair of palmated horns rising above the underwood. It was the bull-moose—there was no mistaking him for any other creature. Near him other forms—three of them—were visible; these were of smaller stature, and I could see that they were hornless. They were the cow and calves; and the herd was made up, as my companion had foretold, of these four individuals.

"We had halted on the moment, each of us holding one of the dogs, and endeavoring to quiet them, as they already scented the game. We soon saw that it was of no use remaining.

where we were, as the herd was fully three hundred yards from us, far beyond the reach of even our heavy deer-guns.

"It would be of no use either to attempt stealing forward. There was no cover that would effectually conceal us, for the timber around was not large, and we could not, therefore, make shift with the tree-trunks.

"There was no other mode, then, but to let the dogs free of their leashes, and dash right forward. We knew we should not get a shot until after a run; but this would not be long, thought we, as the snow was in perfect order for our purpose.

"Our dogs were therefore unleashed, and went off with a simultaneous 'growl,' while my friend and I followed as fast as we could.

"The first note of the deer-hounds was a signal for the herd, and we could hear their huge bodies crashing through the underwood as they started away.

"They ran across some open ground, evidently with the intention of gaining the heavy timber beyond. On this ground there was but little snow; and as we came out through the thicket we had a full view of the noble game. The old bull was in the lead, followed by the others in a string. I observed that none of them galloped—a gait they rarely practice—but all went in a shambling trot, which, however, was a very fast one, equal to the speed of a horse. They carried their heads horizontally, with their muzzles directed forward, while the huge antlers of the bull leaned back upon his shoulders as he ran. Another peculiarity that struck me—the divisions of their great split hoofs, as they lifted them from the ground, met with a cracking sound, like the bursting of percussion-caps; and the four together rattled as they ran, as though a string of Christmas crackers had been touched off. I have often heard a similar cracking from the hoofs of farm-cattle; but with so many hoofs together, keeping up the fire incessantly, it produced a very odd impression upon me.

"In a short time they were out of sight, but we could hear the baying of the dogs as the latter closed upon them, and we followed, guided by the trail they had made.

"We had skated along for nearly a mile, when the howl of the hounds began to sound through the woods with more abrupt and fiercer echoes. We knew by this that the moose had been brought to bay, and we hurried forward, eager to have a shot.

"On arriving at the place, we found that only the old bull had made stand, and he was successfully engaged in keeping off the dogs, both with feet and horns. The others had gone forward, and were out of view.

"The bull, on seeing us approach, once more took the trot, and, followed by the dogs, was soon out of sight.

"On reaching the spot where he had made his temporary halt, we found that his trail there parted from that of the other three, as he had taken almost an opposite direction. Whether he had done so considerately, in order to lead the dogs away from his weaker companions, I know not; perhaps our sudden appearance had terrified him into confusion, and he had struck out without looking before him.

"We did not reflect on these points at the time. My friend, who probably was thinking more about the meat than the sport, without halting a moment, followed the trail of the cow and calves; while I, guided by different motives, took after the bull. I was in too great a hurry to heed some admonitions which were given by my friend as we parted company. As our trails separated, I heard him shouting to me to mind what I was about; but the courses we followed soon carried us beyond earshot or sight of each other.

"I followed the chase about half a mile further, guided by the tracks, as well as by the baying of the bounds. Again this assumed the fierce, angry tone that denoted a battle going on between the dogs and the deer.

"As I neared the spot the voices of the former seemed to grow feebler; then there was a continued howling, as if the hounds were being roughly handled, and one of them I noticed was altogether silent.

"On arriving on the scene, which I did soon after, I learned the cause of this change of tune. One of the dogs met me running back on the trail on three legs only, and wofully mangled. The moose was standing in a snow-pit, which had been trodden out by the animals while battling, and near his feet lay the other dog, mutilated in a most fearful manner, and evidently quite dead. The bull in his rage still continued to assail the dead body of the hound, rising and pouncing down upon it with his forehoofs until the ribs cracked under the concussion.

"On seeing me he again struck into the snow and made off. I saw, however, that his limbs were much lacerated by the frozen crust, and that he ran slowly, leaving red tracks behind him.

"I did not stop by the dogs—one being dead, and the survivor but little better—but kept on after the game.

"We had now got into a tract where the

snow lay of more than usual depth, and my snow-shoes enabled me to skim along faster than the moose himself, that, I could easily perceive, was growing feebler at every plunge. I saw that I was gaining upon him, and would soon be alongside. The woods through which we were passing were pretty open, and I could note every movement of the chase.

"I had got within a hundred yards of him, and was thinking of firing at him as he ran, when all at once he came to a stop, and wheeling suddenly round, stood facing me. His huge antlers were thrown back until they touched his withers, his mane stood erect, all the hair upon his body seemed to bristle forward, and his whole attitude was one of rage and defiance. He was altogether as formidable-looking an enemy as it had ever been my lot to encounter.

"My first thought on getting near enough was to raise my rifle and fire, which I did. I aimed for his chest, that was fair before me, but I shot wide, partly because my fingers were numbed with cold and partly because the sun at the moment flashed in my eyes as I glanced along the barrel. I hit the moose, however, but in a part that was not mortal—in the shoulder.

"The shot enraged him, and without waiting for me to reload he dashed madly forward and toward me. A few plunges brought him up, and I had no resource but to get behind a tree.

"Fortunately there were some large pines in the neighborhood, and behind one of these I took shelter—not, however, before the enraged animal had almost impaled me upon his antlers. As I slipped behind the trunk he was following me so close that his horns came in contact with the tree, causing it to vibrate by the terrific shock. He himself drew back a pace or two, and then stopped and stood fast, eying the tree with sullen rage. His eyes glared and his long stiff hair seemed to quiver as he threatened.

"In the hope that he would allow me time, I again bethought me of reloading my gun. What was my chagrin to find that I had not a grain of powder about me! My friend and I had started with but one powder-flask, and that he had carried with him. My gun was as useless as a bar of iron.

"What was to be done? I dared not approach the bull with my knife—my life would not have been worth five minutes' purchase. His horns and great sharp hoofs were weapons superior to mine. He might throw me down at the first outset, gore me to death, or trample me in the snow. I dared not risk such an encounter.

"After reflecting for some time I concluded that it would be wiser for me to leave the moose where he was and take the back track without him. But how was I to get away from the spot? I was still behind the tree, and the enraged bull was within three feet of it on the other side, without showing any symptoms of retiring. Should I step either to one side or the other, he would lurch himself upon me, and the result would be my certain destruction.

"I now began to perceive that I was in a fix—regularly 'treed,' in fact; and the knowledge was anything but cheering. I did not know how long I might be kept so; perhaps the moose might not leave me at all, or until hunger had done its work. The wound I had given him had certainly rendered him desperate and vengeful, and he appeared as if determined to protract the siege indefinitely.

"After remaining nearly an hour in this situation, I began to grow angry and impatient. I had shouted to frighten the bull, but to no purpose; I had shouted, and at the top of my voice, in hopes that I might be heard by my friend, but there was no response except the echoes of my own voice borne hoarsely through the aisles of the winter forest. I grew impatient of my odd captivity, and determined to stand it no longer.

"On stealing a glance behind me, I perceived a tree as large as the one which sheltered me. I resolved to make for that one, as it would at least not render my situation worse should I reach it in safety. This I effected; but not without having my speed put to the test, for the moose followed so close as almost to touch me with his brow-antlers. Once behind this new tree, I was no better off than before, except that it brought me some twenty paces nearer home. The moose still stood in front of me only a few feet distant, and threatening as fiercely as ever.

"After waiting some minutes for my breath, I selected a third tree in the right direction, and made for it in a similar manner, the moose following as before.

"Another rest and another run brought me behind a fresh tree, and another and another, until I must have made a full mile through the woods, still followed by my implacable and untiring enemy. I knew, however, that I was going homeward, for I guided myself by the trail which we had made in the chase.

"I was in hopes that I might make the whole back-journey in this way, when all at once I perceived that the heavy timber came to an end, and a wide, almost open tract intersected the country; over this the trees were small, stunted pines, far apart, and offering no hope of shelter from my relentless persecutor.

"I had no alternative now but to remain where I was, and await the arrival of my friend, who, I presumed, would come after me as soon as he had finished his own hunt.

"With this dubious hope, I kept my stand, although I was ready to drop with fatigue. To add to my misery, it commenced snowing. I saw this with feelings akin to terror, for I knew that the snow would soon blind the trail; and how, then, was my friend to follow it, and find me? The bull still stood before me in the same threatening attitude, occasionally snorting, striking the ground with his hoofs, and ready to spring after me whenever I should move. Ever as I changed the attitude of my body, he would start forward again, until I could almost touch him with the muzzle of my gun.

"These maneuvers on his part suggested to me an experiment, and I wondered that I had not thought of it before. I was not long in resolving to carry it out. I was armed with a stout hunting-knife, a bowie; it was pointed as sharp as a needle; and could I only have ventured near enough to the bull, I would soon have settled the dispute with him. The idea now occurred to me of converting my bowie into a lance by splicing it upon the barrel of my gun. With this I had hopes of being able to reach my powerful assailant without coming within range either of his hoofs or horns.

"The lance was soon made, a pair of buckskin gaiters which I wore furnished me with thongs. My gun happened to be a long rifle; and the knife, spliced firmly to the muzzle, rendered it a formidable weapon, so that in a few minutes I stood in a better attitude than I had assumed for hours before.

"The affair soon came to an issue. As I had anticipated, by showing myself a little to one side of the tree, the bull sprang forward, and I was enabled, by a dexterous thrust, to plant the knife between his ribs. It entered his heart, and the next moment I saw him rolling over, and kicking the crimsoned snow around him in the struggles of death.

"I had scarcely completed my victory, when a loud whoop sounded in my ears, and looking up, I saw my friend making toward me across the open ground. He had completed his chase, having killed all three, cut them up, and hung their meat upon the trees, to be sent for on our return to the house.

"By his aid the bull was disposed of in a similar manner; and being now satisfied with our day's sport—though my friend very much regretted the loss of his fine dog—we commenced shuffling homeward."

CHAPTER XX.

THE PRAIRIE WOLF AND WOLF-KILLER.

AFTER crossing the Marais de Cygnes River the country became much more open. There was a mixture of timber and prairie land—the latter, however, constantly gaining the ascendancy as we advanced further west. The openings became larger, until they assumed the appearance of vast meadows, inclosed by groves, that at a distance resembled great hedges. Now and then there were copses that stood apart from the larger tracts of forests, looking like islands upon the surface of a green sea, and by the name of "islands" these detached groves are known among the hunters and other denizens of prairie-land. Sometimes the surface was undulating or, as it is there termed, "rolling," and our road was varied, ascending or descending, as we crossed the gentle declivities. The timber through which we had up to this time been passing consisted of ash, burr oak, black walnut, chestnut oak, buckeye, the American elm, hickory, hackberry, sumach, and, in low moist places, the sycamore, and long-leaved willow. These trees, with many others, form the principal growth of the large forests upon the banks of the Mississippi, both east and west.

As we advanced westward, Besancon called our attention to the fact, that all these kinds of timber, one by one, disappeared from the landscape, and in their place a single species alone made up the larger growth of the forests. This was the celebrated "cottonwood," a species of poplar. I say celebrated, because, being almost the only tree of large size which is found throughout the region of the great plains, it is well known to all hunters and prairie travelers, who regard it with a peculiar veneration. A grove of cottonwood is always a glad sight to those who traverse the limitless levels of the prairie. It promises shelter from the wind or sun, wood for the camp-fire, and, above all, water to slake the thirst. As the ocean mariner regards the sight of the welcome port, with similar feelings of joy the mariner of the "prairie sea" beholds, over the broad waste, the silvery foliage of the cottonwood grove, regarding it as his temporary home—his place of rest and refuge.

After traveling through hundreds of small prairies, separated from each other by groves of cottonwood, we arrived at a high point on the waters of the "Little Osage," another tributary of the larger river of that name. As yet we had met with no traces of the buffalo, and were beginning to doubt the correctness of the information we had received at St. Louis,

when we fell in with a band of Kansas Indians—a friendly tribe—who received us in the most courteous manner. From them we learned that the buffalo had been upon the Little Osage at an earlier period in that same year, but that harassed and decimated by their own hunters, they had roamed much further west, and were now supposed to be on the other side of the "Neosho," or Grand River—a northern tributary of the Arkansas.

This was anything but pleasant news. We should have at least another hundred miles to travel before coming up with our game; but there was no thought of going back, until we had done so. No. One and all declared that rather than give up the object of our expedition, we would travel on to the Rocky Mountains themselves, risking the chances of being scalped by hostile Indians.

There was a good deal of bravado in this, it is true; but we were fully determined that we would not go back without our buffalo-hunt.

Thanking our Kansas friends for their courtesy, we parted from them, and headed westward for the Neosho.

As we proceeded, timber became scarce, until at length it was found only on the banks of streams widely distant from each other. Sometimes not a tree was in sight for the whole day's journey. We were now fairly on the prairies.

We crossed the Neosho at length—still no buffalo.

We kept on, and crossed several other large streams, all flowing south-eastwardly to the Arkansas. Still no buffalo.

We began to yearn exceedingly for a sight of the great game. The few deer that were killed from time to time offered us but poor sport, and their meat was not sufficient for our supply.

Of bacon we were heartily tired, and we longed for fresh buffalo beef. The praises lavished by our guides upon the delicacy of this viand—their talk over the camp-fire, about "fat cow" and "boudins" and "hump-ribs," quite tantalized our palates, and we were all eager to try our teeth upon these vaunted tit-bits. No buffalo appeared yet, and we were forced to chew our bacon, as well as our impatience, for several days longer.

A great change now took place in the appearance of the country. The timber became still more scarce, and the soil drier and more sandy. Species of cactus (*opuntia*) appeared along the route, with several other plants new to the eyes of most of us, and which to those of Besancon were objects of extreme interest. But that which most gratified us was the appearance of a new herbage, different entirely from what we had been passing over, and this was hailed by our guides with exclamations of joy. It was the celebrated "buffalo grass." The trappers declared we should not have much further to go until we found the buffaloes themselves, for, wherever this grass existed in plenty, the buffalo, unless driven off by hunting, were sure to be found.

The buffalo grass is a short grass, not more than a few inches in height, with crooked and pointed culms, often throwing out suckers that root again, and produce other leaves and culms, and in this way form a tolerably thick sward. When in flower or seed, it is headed by numerous spikes of half an inch in length, and on these the spikelets are regular and two-rowed.

The buffalo grass forms the favorite and principal fodder of the buffaloes whenever it is in season, and these animals roam over the prairies in search of it.

Of course with this knowledge we were now on the *qui vive*. At every new rise that we made over the swells of the prairie our eyes were busy, and swept the surface on every side of us, and in the course of a few days we encountered several false alarms.

There is a hallucination peculiar to the clear atmosphere of these regions. Objects are not only magnified, but frequently distorted in their outlines, and it is only an old hunter that knows a buffalo when he sees one. By others a bush is often taken for a wild bull, and with us a brace of carrion crows, seated upon the crest of a ridge, were actually thought to be buffaloes, until they suddenly took wing and rose into the air, thus dispelling the illusion!

Long before this time we had encountered that well-known animal of the great plains—the "prairie-wolf."

The prairie-wolf inhabits the vast and still unpeopled territories that lie between the Mississippi river and the shores of the Pacific Ocean. Its range extends beyond what is strictly termed "the prairies." It is found in the wooded and mountainous ravines of California and the Rocky Mountain districts. It is common throughout the whole of Mexico, where it is known as the "coyote." I have seen numbers of this species on the battle-field, tearing at corpses, as far South as the valley of Mexico itself. Its name of prairie-wolf is, therefore, in some respects inappropriate, the more so as the larger wolves are also inhabitants of the prairie. No doubt this name was given it, because the animal was first observed in the prairie country west of the Mississippi by the

early explorers of that region. In the wooded country east of the great river, the common large wolf only is known.

Whatever doubt there may be of the many varieties of the large wolf being distinct species, there can be none with regard to the *Lupus latrans*. It differs from all the others in size, and in many of its habits. Perhaps it more nearly resembles the jackal than any other animal. It is the New-World representative of that celebrated creature.

In size, it is just midway between the large wolf and fox. With much of the appearance of the former, it combines all the sagacity of the latter. It is usually of a grayish color, lighter or darker, according to circumstances, and often with a tinge of cinnamon or brown.

As regards its cunning, the fox is "but a fool to it." It cannot be trapped. Some experiments made for the purpose, show results that throw the theory of instinct quite into the background. It has been known to burrow under a "dead-fall," and drag off the bait without springing the trap. The steel-trap it avoids, no matter how concealed; and the cage-trap has been found "no go."

Further illustrations of the cunning of the prairie-wolf might be found in its mode of decoying within reach the antelopes and other creatures on which it preys.

Of course this species is as much fox as wolf, for in reality a small wolf is a fox, and a large fox is a wolf. To the traveler and trapper of the prairie regions, it is a pest. It robs the former of his provisions—often stealing them out of his very tent; it unbait the traps of the latter, or devours the game already secured in them.

It is a constant attendant upon the caravans or traveling parties that cross prairie-land. A pack of prairie-wolves will follow such a party for hundreds of miles in order to secure the refuse left at the camps. They usually lie down upon the prairie, just out of range of the rifles of the travelers; yet they do not observe this rule always, as they know there is not much danger of being molested. Hunters rarely shoot them, not deeming their hides worth having, and not caring to waste a charge upon them. They are more cautious when following a caravan of California emigrants, where there are plenty of "greenhorns" and amateur-hunters ready to fire at anything.

Prairie-wolves are also constant attendants upon the "gangs" of buffalo. They follow these for hundreds of miles—in fact, the outskirts of the buffalo herd are, for the time being, their home. They lie down on the prairie at a short distance from the buffaloes, and wait and watch, in hopes that some of these animals may get disabled or separated from the rest, or with the expectation that a cow with her new-dropped calf may fall into the rear. In such cases, the pack gather round the unfortunate individual, and worry it to death. A wounded or superannuated bull sometimes "falls out," and is attacked. In this case the fight is more desperate, and the bull is sadly mutilated before he can be brought to the ground. Several wolves, too, are laid *hors de combat* during the struggle.

The prairie traveler may often look around him without seeing a wolf; but let him fire off his gun, and, as if by magic, a score of them will suddenly appear. They start from their hiding-places, and rush forward in hopes of sharing in the produce of the shot.

At night, they enliven the prairie-camp with their dismal howling, although most travelers would gladly dispense with such music. Their note is a bark like that of a terrier-dog, repeated three times, and then prolonged into a true wolf's howl. I have heard farm-house dogs utter a very similar bark. From this peculiarity, some naturalists prefer calling them the "barking wolf," and that is the specific appellation given by Say, who first described them.

Prairie-wolves have all the ferocity of their race, but no creature could be more cowardly. Of course no one fears them under ordinary circumstances, but they have been known to make a combined attack upon persons disabled, and in severe weather, when they themselves were rendered unusually savage by hunger, as already stated. But they are not regarded with fear either by traveler or hunter; and the latter disdains to waste his charge upon such worthless game.

Our guide, Ike, was an exception to this rule. He was the only one of his sort that shot prairie-wolves, and he did so "on sight." I believe if it had been the last bullet in his pouch, and an opportunity had offered of sending it into a prairie-wolf, he would have dispatched the leaden missile. We asked him how many he had killed in his time. He drew a small notched stick from his "possible sack," and desired us to count the notches upon it. We did so. There were one hundred and forty-five in all.

"You have killed one hundred and forty-five, then?" cried we, astonished at the number.

"Yes, i'deed," replied he, with a quiet chuckle, "that many dozen; for every 'un of them natches counts twelve. I only make a natch when I've throwed the clur dozen."

"A hundred and forty five dozen!" we re-

peated in astonishment; and yet I have no doubt of the truth of the trapper's statement, for he had no interest in deceiving us. I am satisfied from what I knew of him, that he had slain the full number stated—one thousand seven hundred and forty!

Of course we became curious to learn the cause of his antipathy to the prairie-wolves; for we knew he had an antipathy, and it was that that had induced him to commit such wholesale havoc among these creatures. It was from this circumstance he had obtained the sobriquet of "wolf-killer." By careful management, we at last got him upon the edge of the story, and quietly pushed him into it. He gave it to us as follows:

"Wal, strengers, abut ten winters a-gone, I wur travelin' from Bent's Fort on the Arkansas, to Laramie on the Platte, all alone b' myself. I had undertuk the journey on some business for Bill Bent—no matter now what."

"I had crossed the divide, and got within sight o' the Black Hills, when one night I had to camp out on the open prairie, without either bush or stone to shelter me."

"That wur, perhaps, the coldest night this nigger remembers; thur wur a wind kim down from the mountains that w'd 'a' froze the ba'r off an iron dog. I gathered my blanket around me, but that wind whistled through it as if it had been a rail-fence."

"Twa'n't no use lyin' down, for I couldn't 'a' slep'; so I sot up."

"You may ask why I hadn't a fire. I'll tell you why. Fust, thur wa'n't a stick o' timber within ten miles o' me; and secondly, if thur had been I dasen't 'a' made a fire. I wur travelin' as bad a bit o' Injun ground as could be found in all the country, and I'd seen Injun sign two or three times that same day. It's true, thur wur a good grist o' buffler-chips about, tol'bly dry, and I mou't have made some sort o' a fire out o' that, an' at last I did make a fire arter a fashion. I did it this-a-way:

"Seeing that with the cussed cold I wa'n't a goin' to get a wink o' sleep, I gathered a wheen o' the buffler-chips. I then dug a whole in the ground with my bowie, an' hard pickin' that wur; but I got through the crust at last, and made a sort o' oven about a fut or a fut and a half deep. At the bottom I laid some dry grass and dead branches o' sage plant, and then settin' it afire, I piled the buffler-chips on top. The thing burnt tol'able well, but the smoke o' the buffler-dung would 'a' choked a skunk."

"As soon as it had got fairly under way, I hunkered, an' sot down over the hole in sich a position as to catch all the heat under my blanket, an' then I was comf'table enough. Of coorse no Injun k'u'd see the smoke arter night, an' it would 'a' tuk sharp eyes to have sighted the fire, I reckon."

"Wal, strengers, the critter I rode wur a young mustang colt, about half broke. I had bought him from a Mexikin at Bent's only the week afore, and it wur his fust journey, leastwise with me. Of coorse I had him on the lariat, but up to this time I had kept the end o' the rope in my hand, because I had that same day lost my picket-pin, an' thinkin' as I wa'n't a goin' to sleep, I mou't as well hold on to it."

"By'm-by, however, I begun to feel drowsy. The fire atween my legs promised to keep me from freezin', an' I thort I mou't as well take a nap. So I tied the lariat round my ankles, sunk my head atween my knees, an' in the twinklin' o' a goat's tail I wur sound. I jest noticed as I wur goin' off that the mustang wur out some yards, nibblin' away at the dry grass o' the prairie."

"I guess I must 'a' slep' about an hour, or tharabouts—I won't be sartint how long. I only know that I didn't wake o' my own accord. I wur awake; an' when I did awake, I still thort I wur a-dreamin'. It would 'a' been a rough dream; but unfortunately for me, it wa'n't a dream, but a jenvine reality."

"At fust I cu'dn't make out what war the matter wi' me, nobow, an' then I thort I wur in the hands o' the Injuns, who were draggin' me over the prairie; an' sure enough, I wur a-draggin' that-a-way, though not by Injuns. Once or twice I lay still for jest a second or two, an' then away I went ag'in, trailin' and bumpin' over the ground, as if I had been tied to the tail o' a gallopin' boss. All the while there wur a yellin' in my ears, as if all the cats an' dogs of creation were arter me."

"Wal, it wur some time afore I compre'nded what all this rough usage meant. I did at last. The pull upon my ankles gave me the idea. It wur the lariat that wur round them. My mustang had stampeded, and wur draggin' me at full gallop across the prairie!"

"The barkin' an' bowlin' an' yelpin' I heerd wur a pack o' prairie wolves. Half famished, they had attacked the mustang, and started him."

"All this kim into my mind at once. You'll say it wur easy to lay hold on the rope an' stop the boss. So it mou't appear, but I kin tell you that it ain't so easy a thing. It wa'n't so to me. My ankles wur in a noose, an' wur drawed clost together. Of coorse, while I wur movin' along I couldn't get to my feet, an' whenever the mustang kim to a halt, an' I had half gath-

ered myself, afore I k'u'd reach the rope, away went the critter ag'in, flingin' me to the ground at full length. Another thing hindered me. Afore goin' to sleep I had put my blanket on Mexikin fashion—that is, wi' my head through a slit in the center—an' as the drag begun the blanket flopped about my face, an' half smothered me. Prehaps, however, an' I thort so arterwurd, that blanket saved me many a scratch, although it bamboozled me a good bit.

"I got the blanket off at at last, arter I had made about a mile, I reckon, and then for the first time I could see about me. Such a sight! The moon wur up, an' I k'u'd see that the ground wur white with snow. It had snowed while I wur asleep; but that wa'n't the sight—the sight wur, that clost up an' around me the hul parairy wur kivered with wolves—cussed parairy-wolves! I k'u'd see their long tongues lollin' out, an' the smoke steamin' from their open mouths.

"Bein' now no longer hampered by the blanket, I made the best use I could o' my arms. Twice I got hold o' the lariat, but afore I k'u'd set myself to pull up the runnin' hoss, it wur jirked out o' my hand ag'in.

"Somehow or other, I had got clutch o' my bowie, and at the next opportunity I made a cut at the rope, and heerd the clean 'snig' o' the knife. Arter that I lay quiet on the parairy, an' I b'lieve I kinder sort o' fainted.

"Twa'n't a long faint nobow; for when I got over it, I k'u'd see the mustang about half a mile off, still runnin' as fast as his legs could carry him, an' most o' the wolves howlin' arter him. A few of these critters had gathered about me, but gettin' to my feet, I made a dash among them wi' the shinin' bowie, an' sent them every which way, I reckon.

"I watched the mustang until he wur clur out o' sight, an' then I wur puzzled what to do. Fust, I went back for my blanket, which I soon rekivered, an' then I follered the back-track to get my gun an' other traps whur I had camped. The trail wur easy, on account o' the snow, an' I k'u'd see whur I had slipped through it all the way.

Having got my possibles, I then tuk arter the mustang, and follered for at least ten miles on his tracks, but I never see'd that mustang ag'in. Whether the wolves hunted him down or not, I can't say, nor I don't care if they did, the scarey brutal I see'd their feet all the way arter him in the snow, and I know'd it wur no use follerin' further. It wur plain I wur put down on the parairy, so I bundled my possibles, and turned head for Laramie's afoot. I had three days' walk o' it, and prehaps I didn't cuss a few!

"I wur right bad used. Thur wa'n't a bone in my body that didn't ache, as if I had been passed through a sugar-mill; and my clothes and skin were torn consid'ably. It mout'a' been wuss but for the blanket an' the sprinkle o' snow that made the ground a leetle slicker.

"Howsomever, I got safe to the fort, whur I wur soon rigged out in a fresh suit o' buckskin an' a hoss.

"But I never arterwurd see'd a parairy-wolf within range o' my rifle, that I didn't let it into him, an' as you see, I throwed a good when in their tracks since then. Wag! Hain't I, Mark?"

CHAPTER XXI.

THE BUFFALOES AT LAST.

THE long-looked-for day at length arrived when the game were to be met with, and I had myself the "distinguished honor" of being the first not only to see the great buffalo, but to throw a couple of them "in their tracks." This incident, however, was not without an "adventure," and one that was neither very pleasant nor without peril. During several late days of our journey we had been in the habit of straggling a good deal in search of game—deer if we could find it, but more especially in hopes of fallin' in with the buffalo. Sometimes we went in twos and threes, but as often one of the party rode off alone to hunt wherever his inclination guided him. Sometimes these solitary expeditions took place while the party was on the march, but oftener during the hours after we had pitched our night-camp.

One evening, after we had camped as usual, and my brave horse had eaten his "bite" of corn, I leaped into the saddle and rode off in hopes of finding something fresh for supper. The prairie where we had halted was a "rollin'" one, and as the camp had been fixed on a small stream between two great swells, it was not visible at any great distance. As soon, therefore, as I had crossed one of the ridges, I was out of sight of my companions. Trusting to the sky for my direction, I continued on.

"After riding about a mile I came upon buffalo "sign," consisting of several circular holes in the ground, five or six feet in diameter, known as buffalo "wallows." I saw at a glance that the sign was fresh. There were several wallows; and I could tell by the tracks, in the dusk, there had been bulls in that quarter. So I continued on in hopes of getting a sight of the animals that had been wallowing.

Shortly after I came to a place where the ground was plowed up, as if a drove of hogs

had been rooting it. Here there had been a terrible fight among the bulls—it was the rutting season when such conflicts occur. This augured well. Perhaps they are still in the neighborhood, reasoned I, as I gave the spur to my horse, and galloped forward with more spirit.

I had ridden full five miles from camp, when my attention was attracted by an odd noise ahead of me. There was a ridge in front that prevented me from seeing what produced the noise; but I knew what it was—it was the bellowing of a buffalo-bull.

At intervals there were quick shocks, as of two hard substances coming in violent contact with each other.

I mounted the ridge with caution and looked over its crest. There was a valley beyond; a cloud of dust was rising out of its bottom, and in the midst of this I could distinguish too huge forms—dark and hirsute.

I saw at once that they were a pair of buffalo-bulls engaged in a fierce fight. They were alone; there were no others in sight, either in the valley or on the prairie beyond.

I did not halt longer than to see that the cap was on my rifle and to cock the piece. Occupied as the animals were, I did not imagine they would heed me; or, if they should attempt flight, I knew I could easily overtake one or other; so, without further hesitation or precaution, I rode toward them.

Contrary to my expectation, they both "winded" me, and started off. The wind was blowing freshly toward them, and the sun had thrown my shadow between them, so as to draw their attention.

They did not run, however, as if badly scared; on the contrary, they went off, apparently indignant at being disturbed in their fight; and every now and then both came round with short turnings, snorted, and struck the prairie with their hoofs in a violent and angry manner.

Once or twice, I fancied they were going to charge upon me; and had I been otherwise than well mounted, I should have been very chary of risking such an encounter. A more formidable pair of antagonists, as far as appearance went, could not have been well conceived. Their huge size, their shaggy fronts, and fierce glaring eyeballs, gave them a wild and malicious seeming, which was heightened by their bellowing, and the threatening attitudes in which they continually placed themselves.

Feeling quite safe in my saddle I galloped up to the nearest, and sent my bullet into his ribs. It did the work. He fell to his knees—rose again—spread out his legs, as if to prevent a second fall—rocked from side to side like a cradle—again came to his knees; and after remaining in this position for some minutes, with the blood running from his nostrils, rolled quietly over on his shoulder, and lay dead.

I had watched these maneuvers with interest, and permitted the second bull to make his escape; a side glance had shown me the latter disappearing over the crest of the swell.

I did not care to follow him, as my horse was somewhat jaded, and I knew it would cost me a sharp gallop to come up with him again; so I thought no more of him at that time, but alighted, and prepared to deal with the one already slain.

There stood a solitary tree near the spot—it was a stunted cottonwood. There were others upon the prairie, but they were distant; this one was not twenty yards from the carcass. I led my horse up to it, and taking the trail-rope from the horn of the saddle, made one end fast to the bit-ring, and the other to the tree. I then went back, drew my knife, and proceeded to cut up the buffalo.

I had hardly whetted my blade, when a noise from behind caused me to leap to an upright attitude, and look round; at the first glance, I comprehended the noise. A huge dark object was passing the crest of the ridge, and rushing down the hill toward the spot where I stood. It was the buffalo-bull, the same that had just left me.

The sight, at first thought, rather pleased me than otherwise. Although I did not want any more meat, I should have the triumph of carrying two tongues instead of one to the camp. I therefore hurriedly sheathed my knife, and laid hold of my rifle, which, according to custom, I had taken the precaution to reload.

I hesitated a moment whether to run to my horse and mount him, or to fire from where I stood. That question, however, was settled by the buffalo. The tree and the horse were to one side of the direction in which he was running, but being attracted by the loud snorting of the horse, which had begun to pitch and plunge violently, and deeming it perhaps a challenge, the buffalo suddenly swerved from his course, and ran full tilt upon the horse. The latter shot out instantly to the full length of the trail-rope—a heavy "pluck" sounded in my ears, and the next instant I saw my horses part from the tree, and scour off over the prairie, as if there had been a thistle under his tail. I had knotted the rope negligently upon the bit-ring, and the knot had "come undone."

I was chagrined, but not alarmed as yet. My horse would no doubt follow back his own trail, and at the worst I should only have to walk to the

camp. I should have the satisfaction of punishing the buffalo for the trick he had served me; and with this design I turned toward him.

I saw that he had not followed the horse, but was again heading himself in my direction.

Now, for the first time, it occurred to me that I was in something of a scrape. The bull was coming furiously on. Should my shot miss, or even should it only wound him, how was I to escape? I knew that he could overtake me in a three minutes' stretch; I knew that well.

I had not much time for reflection—not a moment in fact: the infuriated animal was within ten paces of me. I raised my rifle, aimed at his fore shoulder, and fired.

I saw that I had hit him; but, to my dismay, he neither fell nor stumbled, but continued to charge forward more furiously than ever.

To reload was impossible. My pistols had gone off with my horse and holsters. Even to reach the tree was impossible—the bull was between it and me.

To make off in the opposite direction was the only thing that held out the prospect of five minutes' safety; I turned and ran.

I can run as fast as most men, and upon that occasion I did my best. It would have put "Gildersleeve" into a white sweat to have distanced me; but I had not been two minutes at it, when I felt conscious that the buffalo gained upon me, and was almost treading upon my heels! I knew it only by my ears—I dared not spare time to look back.

At this moment an object appeared before me that promised, one way or another, to interrupt the chase—it was a ditch or gully, that intersected my path at right angles. It was several feet in depth, dry at the bottom, and with perpendicular sides.

I was almost upon its edge before I noticed it, but the moment it came under my eye, I saw that it offered the means of a temporary safety at least. If I could only leap this gully, I felt satisfied that the buffalo could not.

It was a sharp leap—at least seventeen feet from cheek to cheek—but I had done more than that in my time, and, without halting in my gait, I ran forward to the edge, and sprang over.

I alighted cleverly upon the opposite bank, where I stopped, and turned round to watch my pursuer.

I now ascertained how near my end I had been; the bull was already up to the very edge of the gully. Had I not made my leap at the instant I did, I should have been by that time dancing upon his horns. He himself had balked at the leap—the deep, chasm-like cleft had cowed him. He saw that he could not clear it, and now stood upon the opposite bank, with head lowered and spread nostrils, his tail lashing his brown flanks, while his glaring black eyes expressed the full measure of his baffled rage.

I remarked that my shot had taken effect in his shoulder, as the blood trickled from his long hair.

I had almost begun to congratulate myself on having escaped, when a hurried glance to the right, and another to the left, cut short my happiness. I saw that on both sides, at a distance of less than fifty paces, the gully shallowed out into the plain, where it ended; at either end it was, of course, passable.

The bull observed this almost at the same time as myself; and, suddenly turning away from the brink, he ran along the edge of the chasm, evidently with the intention of turning it.

In less than a minute's time we were once more on the same side, and my situation appeared as terrible as ever; but stepping back for a short run, I re-leaped the chasm, and again we stood on opposite sides.

During all these maneuvers I had held on to my rifle, and seeing now that I might have time to load it, I commenced feeling for my powder-horn. To my astonishment, I could not lay my hands upon it; I looked down to my breast for the sling—it was not there; belt and bullet-pouch too—all were gone! I remembered lifting them over my head, when I set about cutting the dead bull. They were lying by the carcass.

This discovery was a new source of chagrin; but for my negligence, I could now have mastered my antagonist.

To reach the ammunition would be impossible—I should be overtaken before I had got half-way to it.

I was not allowed much time to indulge in my regrets; the bull had again turned the ditch, and was once more upon the same side with me, and I was compelled to take another leap.

I really do not remember how often I sprang backward and forward across that chasm; I should think a dozen times at least, and I became wearied with the exercise. The leap was just as much as I could do at my best; and as I was growing weaker at each fresh spring, I became satisfied that I should soon leap short, and crush myself against the steep rocky sides of the chasm.

Should I fall to the bottom, my pursuer could easily reach me by entering at either end, and

I began to dread such a finale. The vengeful brute showed no symptoms of retiring; on the contrary, the numerous disappointments seemed only to render him more determined in his resentment.

An idea, now suggested itself to my mind.

I had looked all round to see if there might not be something that offered a better security. There were trees, but they were too distant; the only one near was that to which my horse had been tied. It was a small one, and, like all of its species (it was a cottonwood), there were no branches near the root.

I knew that I could clamber up it by embracing the trunk, which was not over ten inches in diameter. Could I only succeed in reaching it, it would at least shelter me better than the ditch, of which I was getting heartily tired.

But the question was, could I reach it before the bull?

It was about three hundred yards off. By proper maneuvering I should have a start of fifty. Even with that, it would be a "close shave," and it proved so.

I arrived at the tree, however, and sprung up it like a mountebank; but the hot breath of the buffalo steamed after me as I ascended, and the concussion of his heavy skull against the trunk almost shook me back upon his horns.

After a severe effort of climbing, I succeeded in lodging myself among the branches.

I was now safe from all immediate danger, but how was the affair to end?

I knew from the experience of others, that my enemy might stay for hours by the tree—perhaps for days!

Hours would be enough. I could not stand it long. I already hungered, but a worse appetite began to torture me—thirst. The hot sun, the dust, the violent exercise of the past hour, all contributed to make me thirsty. Even then, I would have risked life for a draught of water. What would it come to should I not be relieved?

I had but one hope—that my companions would come to my relief; but I knew that that would not be before morning. They would miss me of course. Perhaps my horse would return to camp—that would send them out in search for me—but not before night had fallen. In the darkness they could not follow my trail. Could they do so in the light?

This last question, which I had put to myself, startled me. I was just in a condition to look upon the dark side of everything, and it now occurred to me that they might not be able to find me!

There were many possibilities that they might not. There were numerous horse-trails on the prairie, where Indians had passed. I saw this when tracking the buffalo. Besides, it might rain in the night, and obliterate them all—my own with the rest. They were not likely to find me by chance. A circle of ten miles diameter is a large tract. It was a rolling prairie, as already stated; full of inequalities, ridges with valleys between. The tree upon which I was perched stood in the bottom of one of the valleys—it could not be seen from any point over three hundred yards distant. Those searching for me might pass within hail without perceiving either the tree or the valley.

I remained for a long time busied with such gloomy thoughts and forebodings. Night was coming on, but the fierce and obstinate brute showed no disposition to raise the siege. He remained watchful as ever, walking round and round at intervals, lashing his tail, and uttering that snorting sound so well known to the prairie-hunter, and which so much resembles the grunting of hogs when suddenly alarmed. Occasionally he would bellow loudly like the common bull.

While watching his various maneuvers, an object on the ground drew my attention—it was the trail rope left by my horse. One end of it was fastened round the trunk by a firm knot—the other lay far out upon the prairie, where it had been dragged. My attention had been drawn to it by the bull himself, that in crossing over it had noticed it, and now and then pawed it with his hoofs.

All at once a bright idea flashed upon me—a sudden hope arose within me—a plan of escape presented itself, so feasible and possible that I leaped in my perch as the thought struck me.

The first step was to get possession of the rope. This was of such an easy matter. The rope was fastened around the tree, but the knot had slipped down the trunk and lay upon the ground. I dared not descend for it.

Necessity soon suggested a plan.

My "picker"—a piece of straight wire with a ring end—hung from one of my breast buttons. This I took hold of and bent in the shape of a grappling-hook. I had no cord, but my knife was still safe in its sheath, and drawing this I cut several thongs from the skirt of my buckskin shirt and knotted them together until they formed a string long enough to reach the ground. To one end I attached the picker, and then letting it down, I commenced angling for the rope.

After a few transverse drags the hook caught the latter, and I pulled it up into the tree, taking the whole of it in until I held the loose

end in my hands. The other end I permitted to remain as it was. I saw it was securely knotted around the trunk, and that was just what I wanted.

It was my intention to lasso the bull, and for this purpose I proceeded to make a running-noose on the end of the trail-rope.

This I executed with great care and with all my skill. I could depend upon the rope—it was raw hide, and a better was never twisted—but I knew that if anything should chance to slip at a critical moment it might cost me my life. With this knowledge, therefore, I spliced the eye and made the knot as firm as possible, and then the loop was reeved through, and the thing was ready.

I could throw a lasso tolerably well, but the branches prevented me from winding it around my head. It was necessary, therefore, to get the animal in a certain position under the tree, which, by shouts and other demonstrations, I at length succeeded in effecting.

The moment of success had arrived. He stood almost directly below me. The noose was shot down—I had the gratification to see it settle around his neck—and with a quick jerk I tightened it. The rope ran beautifully through the eye, until both eye and loop were buried beneath the shaggy hair of the animal's neck. It embraced his throat in the right place, and I felt confident it would hold.

The moment the bull felt the jerk upon his throat he dashed madly out from the tree, and then commenced running in circles around it.

Contrary to my intention, the rope had slipped from my hands at the first drag upon it. My position was rather an unsteady one, for the branches were slender, and I could not manage matters as well as I could have wished.

But I now felt confident enough. The bull was tethered, and it only remained for me to get out beyond the length of his tether and take to my heels.

My gun lay on one side, near the tree, where I had dropped it in my race. This, of course, I meant to carry off with me.

I waited then until the animal, in one of his circles, had got round to the opposite side, and slipping silently down the trunk I sprang out, picked up my rifle, and ran.

I knew the trail-rope to be about twenty yards in length, but I ran a hundred at least before making halt. I had even thoughts of continuing on, as I still could not help some misgivings about the rope.

The bull was one of the largest and strongest. The rope might break, the knot upon the tree might give way or the noose might slip over his head.

Curiosity, however, or rather a desire to be assured of my safety, prompted me to look around, when to my joy, I beheld the huge monster stretched upon the plain. I could see the rope as taut as a bow-string; and the tongue protruding from the animal's jaws showed me that he was strangling himself as fast as I could desire.

"At the sight, the idea of buffalo-tongue for supper returned in all its vigor; and it now occurred to me that I should eat that very tongue, and no other.

I immediately turned in my tracks, ran toward my powder and balls—which, in my eagerness to escape, I had forgotten all about—seized the horn and pouch, poured in a charge, rammed down a bullet, and then stealing nimbly up behind the still struggling bull, I placed the muzzle within three feet of his brisket, and fired. He gave a death-kick or two, and then lay quiet; it was all over with him.

I had the tongue from between his teeth in a twinkling; and proceeding to the other bull, I finished the operations I had commenced upon him. I was too tired to think of carrying a very heavy load; so I contented myself with the tongues, and slinging these over the barrel of my rifle, I shouldered it, and set out to grope my way back to camp.

The moon had risen, and I had no difficulty in following my own trail; but before I had got half-way, I met several of my companions shouting, and at intervals firing off their guns.

My horse had got back a little before sunset. His appearance, had of course, produced alarm, and the camp had turned out in search of me.

Several who had a relish for fresh meat galloped back to strip the two bulls of the remaining tit-bits; but before midnight all had returned; and to the accompaniment of the hump-ribs spurring in the cheerful blaze, I recounted the details of my adventure.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BISON.

THE bison is, perhaps, the most interesting animal in America. Its great size and strength—the prodigious numbers in which it was found at the time of which I write; its peculiar *habitat*; the value of its flesh and hide to the traveler, as well as to the many tribes of Indians; the mode of its chase and capture; all these circumstances render the buffalo an interesting and highly-prized animal.

Besides, it is the largest ruminant indigenous to America, exceeding in weight even the moose-deer, which latter, however, equals it in

height. With the exception of the musk-ox, it is the only indigenous animal of the bovine tribe, but the latter being confined to a very limited range, near the Arctic Sea, has been less subject to the observation and attention of the civilized world. The buffalo, therefore, may be regarded as the representative of the ox in America.

A full-grown buffalo bull is six feet high at the shoulders, eight feet from the snout to the base of the tail, and will weigh about 1,500 lbs.

Rare individuals exist whose weight much exceeds this. The cows are, of course, much smaller than the bulls, and scarcely come up to the ordinary standard of farm-cattle.

The flesh of the buffalo is juicy and delicious, equal, indeed superior, to well-fed beef. It may be regarded as beef with a *game flavor*. Many people—travelers and hunters—prefer it to any other species of meat.

The flesh of the cow, as may be supposed, is more tender and savory than that of the bull; and in a hunt, when "meat" is the object, the cow is selected as a mark for the arrow or bullet.

The parts most esteemed are the tongue, the "hump-ribs" (the long spinous processes of the first dorsal vertebrae), and the marrow of the shank bones. "Boudins" (part of the intestines) are also favorite "tit-bits" among the Indians and trappers.

The tongues, when dried, are really superior to those of common beefs, and, indeed, the same may be said of the other parts, but there is a better and worse in buffalo beef, according to the age and sex of the animal. "Fat cow" is a term for the super-excellent, and by "poor bull," or "old bull," is meant a very unpalatable article, only to be eaten by the hunter in times of necessity.

In Texas, the buffalo yet extends its migrations to the head-waters of the Brazos and Colorado, but it is not a Mexican animal. Following the Rocky Mountains from the great bend of the Rio Grande northward, we find no buffalo west of them until we reach the higher latitudes near the sources of the Saskatchewan. There they have crossed the mountains, and are now to be met with in some of the plains that lie on the other side. This, however, is a late migration, occasioned by hunter-pressure upon the eastern slope. The same has been observed at different periods at other points in the Rocky Mountain chain, where the buffalo had made a temporary lodgment on the Pacific side of the mountains, but where they are now entirely extinct. It is known, from the traditional history of the tribes on the west side, that the buffalo was only a new-comer among them, and was not indigenous to that division of the continent.

Following the buffaloes north, we find their range coterminous with the prairies. The latter end in an angle between the Peace River and the Great Slave Lake, and beyond this the buffalo does not run. There is a point, however, across an arm of the Slave Lake where buffalo are found. It is called Slave Point, and although contiguous to the primitive rocks of the "Barren Grounds," it is of a similar geology (*stratified limestone*) with the buffalo prairies to the west. This, to the geologist, is an interesting fact.

From the Slave Lake, a line drawn to the head-waters of the Mississippi, and passing through Lake Winnipeg, will shut in the buffalo country along the northeast. They are still found in large bands upon the western shores of Winnipeg, on the plains of the Saskatchewan and the Red River of the North. In fact, buffalo-hunting is one of the chief employments of the inhabitants of that half-Indian colony known as the "Red River Settlements."

The buffalo runs with a gait apparently heavy and lumbering—first heaving to one side, then to the other, like a ship at sea; but this gait, although not equal in speed to that of a horse, is far too fast for a man on foot, and the swiftest runner, unless favored by a tree or some other object, will be surely overtaken, and either gored to death by the animal's horns or pounded to a jelly under his heavy hoofs. Instances of the kind are far from being rare, and could amateur hunters only get at the buffalo, such occurrences would be fearfully common. An incident illustrative of these remarks is told by the traveler and naturalist Richardson, and may, therefore, be safely regarded as a fact.

"While I resided at Charlton House, an incident of this kind occurred. Mr. Finnan McDonald, one of the Hudson Bay Company's clerks, was descending the Saskatchewan in a boat, and one evening, having pitched his tent for the night, he went out in the dusk to look for game.

"It had become nearly dark when he fired at a bison bull, which was galloping over a small eminence; and as he was hastening forward to see if the shot had taken effect, the wounded beast made a rush at him. He had the presence of mind to seize the animal by the long hair on his forehead, as it struck him on the side with its horns, and being a remarkably tall and powerful man, a struggle ensued, which continued until his wrist was severely sprained, and

his arm was rendered powerless: he then fell, and after receiving two or three blows, became senseless.

"Shortly after he was found by his companions lying bathed in blood, being gored in several places; and the bison was crouched beside him, apparently waiting to renew the attack, had he shown any signs of life. Mr. McDonald recovered from the immediate effects of the injuries he received, but he died a few months after." Dr. Richardson adds: "Many other instances might be mentioned of the tenaciousness with which this animal pursues its revenge; and I have been told of a hunter having been detained for many hours in a tree by an old bull which had taken its post below to watch him."

CHAPTER XXIII.

TRAILING THE BUFFALO.

AFTER a breakfast of fresh buffalo-meat we took the road in high spirits. The long-expected sport would soon come off. Every step showed us "buffalo sign"—tracks, wallows, fresh ordure. None of the animals were yet in sight, but the prairie was filled with undulations, and no doubt "a gang" would be found in some of the valleys.

A few miles further on, and we came suddenly upon a "buffalo road," traversing the prairie nearly at right angles to our own direction.

This caused a halt and consultation. Should we follow the road? By all means thought every one. The tracks were fresh—the road a large one—thousands of buffaloes must have passed over it; where were they now? They might be a hundred miles off, for when these animals get upon one of these regular roads they often journey at great speed, and it is difficult to overtake them. When merely browsing over the prairie the case is different.

Then they travel only a few miles a day, and a hunter trailing them soon comes up with the gang.

Ike and Redwood were consulted as to what was best to be done. They had both closely examined the trail, bending down to the ground, and carefully noting every symptom that would give them a clue to the condition of the herd—its numbers—its time of passing—the rate of its speed, etc.

"Thur's a good grist o' 'em," said Ike, "leastways a kuppel o' thousand in the gang—thur's bulls, cows, yearlin's an' young calf too, so we'll have a choice o' meat—either beef or veal. Kin we do better than foller 'em up? Eh, Mark?"

"Wal! I don't think we can, ole hoss," replied Redwood. "They passed hyur yesterday jest about noon—that is, the thick o' the drove passed then."

"How do you tell that?" inquired several.

"Oh, that's easy made out," replied the guide, evidently regarding the question as a very simple one; "you see most o' these hyur tracks is a day old, an' yet thur not two."

"And why not?"

"Why how could they be two," asked the guide in astonishment, "when it rained yesterday before sun-up! Thur made since the rain, y'll admit that?"

We now remembered the rain, and acknowledged the truth of this reasoning. The animals must have passed since it rained; but why not immediately after, in the early morning? How could Redwood tell that it was the hour of noon? How?

"Easy enough, comrades," replied he.

"Anv greenhorn mou't do that," added Ike. The rest, however, were puzzled and awaited the explanation.

"I tells this-a-way," continued the guide. "Ef the buffler had passed by hyur, immediately after the rain, thar tracks w'd 'a' sunk deeper, and thar w'd 'a' been more mud on the trail. As thar ain't no great slobber about, ye see, I make my kalkulations that the ground must 'a' been well dried afore they kim along, and after such a wet, it could not 'a' been afore noon at the least—so that's how I know the buffler passed at that hour."

We were all interested in this craft of our guides, for without consulting each other they had both arrived at the same conclusion by the same process of mental logic. They had also determined several other points about the buffalo—such as that they had not all gone together, but in a straggling herd; that some had passed more rapidly than the rest; that no hunters were after them; and that it was probable they were not bound upon any distant migration, but only in search of water; and the direction they had taken rendered this likely enough. Indeed most of the great buffalo roads lead to watering places, and they have often been the means of conducting the thirsty traveler to the welcome rivulet or spring, when otherwise he might have perished upon the dry plain. Whether the buffalo are guided by some instinct toward water, is a question not satisfactorily solved. Certain it is, that their water-paths often lead in the most direct route to streams and ponds, of the existence of which they could have known nothing previously. It is certain that many of the lower animals possess either an "instinct," or a much keener sense in these matters than man himself. Long before the

thirsty traveler suspects the propinquity of water, his sagacious mule, by her joyful hinny, and suddenly altered bearing, warns him of its presence.

We now reasoned that if the buffalo had been making to some watering-place, merely for the purpose of drinking and cooling their flanks, they would, of course, make a delay there, and so give us a chance of coming up. They had a day the start of us, it is true, but we should do our best to overhaul them. The guides assured us we were likely to have good sport before we came up with the great gang. There were straggling groups they had no doubt, some perhaps not over thirsty, that had hung in the rear. In high hopes, then, we turned our heads to the trail, and traveled briskly forward.

We had not gone many hundred yards when a very singular scene was presented to our eyes. We had gained the crest of a ridge, and were looking down into a little valley through which ran the trail. At the bottom of the valley a cloud of dust was constantly rising upward, and very slowly moving away, as the day was quite calm. Although there had been rain a little over thirty hours before, the ground was already parched and dry as pepper. But what caused the dust to rise? Not the wind—there was none. Some animal then, or likely more than one!

At first we could perceive no creature within the cloud, so dun and thick was it; but after a little a wolf dashed out, ran round a bit, and then rushed in again, and then another and another, all of them with open jaws, glaring eyes, manes erect, and tails switching about in a violent and angry manner. Now and then we could only see part of their bodies, or their bushy tails flung upward, but we could hear by their yelping barks that they were engaged in a fierce contest either among themselves, or with some other enemy. It was not among themselves, as Ike and Redwood both affirmed.

"An old bull 's the game," said they; and without waiting a moment, the two trappers galloped forward, followed closely by the rest of our party.

We were soon in the bottom of the little valley. Ike already cracking away at the wolves—his peculiar enemies. Several others, led away by the excitement, also emptied their pieces at these worthless creatures, slaying a number of them, while the rest, nearly a dozen in all, took to their heels, and scampered off over the ridges.

The dust gradually began to float off, and through the thinner cloud that remained we now saw what the wolves had been at. Standing in the center of a ring, formed by its own turnings and struggles, was the huge form of a buffalo-bull. Its shape indicated that it was a very old one, lank, lean, and covered with long hair, ragged and torn into tufts. Its color was that of a white dust, but red blood was streaming freshly down its hind flanks, and from his nose and mouth. The cartilage of the nose was torn to pieces by the fierce enemies it had so lately encountered, and on observing it more closely we saw that his eyes were pulled out of their sockets, exhibiting a fearful spectacle. The tail was eaten off by repeated wrenches, and the hind quarters were sadly mangled. Spite of all this mutilation, the old bull still kept his feet, and his prowess had been proved, for no less than five wolves lay around, that he had "rubbed out" previous to our arrival. He was a terrible and melancholy spectacle, that old bull, and all agreed it would be better to relieve him by a well-aimed bullet. This was instantly fired at him; and the animal after rocking about a while on his spread legs, fell gently to the earth.

Of course he had proved himself too tough to be eatable by anything but prairie wolves, and we were about to leave him as a prey. Ike, however, had no idea of gratifying these sneaking creatures at so cheap a rate. He was determined they should not have their dinner so easily, so taking out his knife he extracted the bladder, and some of the smaller intestines from the buffalo. These he inflated in a trice, and then rigging up a sapling over the body, he hung them upon it, so that the slightest breeze kept them in motion. This, as we had already been assured, was the best mode of keeping wolves at a distance from any object, and the hunter, when wolves are near, often avails himself of it to protect the venison or buffalo-meat which he is obliged to leave behind him.

The guide having rigged his "scare wolf," mounted his old mare, and again joined us, muttering his satisfaction as he rode along.

We had not traveled much further when our attention was attracted by noises in front, and again from a ridge we beheld a scene still more interesting than that we had just witnessed. As before, the actors were buffalo and wolves, but this time there was very little dust, as the contest was carried on upon the green turf—and we could see distinctly the maneuvers of the animals.

There were three buffaloes—a cow, her calf, and a large bull that was acting as their champion and protector. A pack of wolves had gathered around them, in which there were

some of the larger species, and these kept up a continuous attack, the object of which was to destroy the calf, and its mother if possible. This the bull was using all his endeavors to prevent, and with considerable success too, as already several of the wolves were down, and howling with pain. But what rendered the result doubtful was, that fresh wolves were constantly galloping up to the spot, and the buffaloes would likely have to yield in time. It was quite amusing to see the efforts made by the cunning brutes, to separate the calf from its protectors. Sometimes they would get it a few feet to the one side, and fling it to the ground; but before they could do it any great injury, the active bull, and the cow as well, would rush forward upon them, scattering the cowardly creatures like a flock of birds. Then the calf would place itself between the old ones, and would thus remain for a while, until the wolves, having arranged some new plan, would recommence the attack, and drive it forth again. Once the position was strikingly in favor of the buffaloes. This position, which seemed in the hurry of the conflict to turn up accidentally, was in fact the result of design, for the old ones every now and then endeavored to renew it, but were hindered by the stupidity of the calf. The latter was placed between them in such a way that the heads of the bull and cow were in opposite directions, and thus both flanks were guarded. In this way the buffaloes might have held their ground, but the silly calf when closely menaced by the wolves foolishly started out, rendering it necessary for its protectors to assume a new attitude of defense.

It was altogether a singular conflict, a touching picture of parental fondness. The end of it was easily guessed. The wolves would tire out the old ones, and get hold of the calf of course, although they might spend a long time about it. But the great herd was distant, and there was no hope for the cow to get her offspring back to its protection. It would certainly be destroyed.

Notwithstanding our sympathy for the little family thus assailed, we were not the less anxious to do for them just what the wolves wished to do—kill and eat them. With this intent we all put spur to our horses, and galloped right forward to the spot.

Not one of the animals—neither wolves nor buffaloes—took any notice of us until we were within a few yards of them. The wolves then scampered off, but already the cracking rifles and shot-guns were heard above the shouts of the charging cavalcade, and both the cow and calf were seen sinking to the earth. Not so the huge bull. With glaring eyeballs he glanced around upon his new assailants, and then, as if aware that further strife was useless, he stretched forth his neck, and breaking through the line of horsemen, went off in full flight.

A fresh touch of the spur, with a wrench of the bridle-rein, brought our horses round, and set their heads after him, and then followed as fine a piece of chasing as I remember to have taken part in. The whole eight of us swept over the plain in pursuit, but as we had all emptied our pieces on first charging up, there was not one ready to deliver a shot even should we overtake the game. In the quick gallop no one thought of reloading. Our pistols, however, were still charged, and these were grasped and held in readiness.

It was one of the most exciting chases. There before us galloped the great game under full view, with neither brake nor bush to interrupt the pleasure of our wild race. The bull proved to be one of the fastest of his kind—for there is a considerable difference in this respect. He led us nearly half a mile across the ridges before even the best of our horses could come up, and then just as we were closing in upon him, before a shot had been fired, he was seen to give a sudden lunge forward and tumble over upon the ground.

Some of us fancied he had only missed his footing and stumbled; but no motion could be perceived as we rode forward, and on coming up he was found to be quite dead! A rifle bullet had done the work—one that had been fired in the first volley—and his strong, fast run was only the last spasmodic effort of his life.

One or two remained by the dead bull to get his hide and the "tit-bits" of his meat, while the rest rode back to recover the more precious cow and calf. What was our chagrin to find that the rascally wolves had been before us! Of the tender calf, not a morsel remained beyond a few tufts of hairy skin, and the cow was so badly torn and mutilated that she was not worth cutting up! Even the tongue, that most delicate bit, had been appropriated by the sneaking thieves, and eaten out to the very root.

As soon as they had observed us coming back they had taken to their heels, each carrying a large piece with him, and we could now see them out upon the prairie devouring the meat before our very eyes. Ike was loud in his anathemas, and but that the creatures were too cunning for him, would have taken his revenge upon the spot. They kept off, however, beyond range of either rifle or double-barrel, and Ike

was forced to nurse his wrath for some other occasion.

We now went back to the bull, where we encamped for the night. The latter, tough as he was, furnished us an excellent supper from his tongue, hump-ribs, boudins, and marrow-bones, and we all lay down to sleep and dream of the sports of to-morrow.

CHAPTER XXIV.

APPROACHING THE BUFFALO.

NEXT morning, just as we were preparing to resume our journey, a gang of buffalo appeared upon one of the swells, at the distance of a mile or a mile and a half from our camp. There were about a dozen of them, and, as our guides asserted, they were all cows. This was just what we wanted, as the flesh of the cows is much more delicate than that of the bulls, and we were eager to lay in a stock of it.

A hurried consultation was held, in which it was debated as to the best manner of making an attack upon the herd. Some advised that we should ride boldly forward, and overtake the cows by sheer swiftness, but this mode was objected to by others. The cows are at times very shy. They might break off long before we were near, and give our horses such a gallop as would render them useless for the rest of the day. Besides, our animals were in no condition for such exercise. Our stock of corn had run out, and the grass feeding and hard traveling had reduced most of them to skeletons. A hard gallop was therefore to be avoided, if possible.

Among those who counseled a different course were the guides Ike and Redwood. These men thought it would be much better to try the cows by "approaching," that is, by endeavoring to creep up, and get a shot when near enough. The ground was favorable enough for it, as there were here and there little clumps of cactus plants and bushes of the wild sage (*artemisia*), behind which a hunter might easily conceal himself. The trappers further alleged that the herd would not be likely to make off at the first shot, unless the hunter discovered himself. On the contrary, one after another might fall, and not frighten the rest, so long as these did not get to leeward, and detect the presence of their enemy by the scent.

The wind was in our favor, and this was an important consideration. Had it been otherwise the game would have "winded" us at a mile's distance, as they can recognize the smell of man, and frequently comprehend the danger of being near such an enemy. Indeed, it is on their great power of scent that the buffalo most commonly rely for warning. The eyes of these creatures, and particularly the bulls, are so covered with the shaggy hair hanging over them, that individuals are often seen quite blinded by it, and a hunter, if he keep silent enough, may walk up and lay his hand upon them, without having been previously noticed. This, however, can only occur when the hunter travels against the wind. Otherwise he finds the buffalo as shy and difficult to approach as most game, and many a long spell of crouching and crawling has been made to no purpose—a single sniff of the approaching enemy proving enough to startle the game, and send it off in wild flight.

Ike and his brother trapper urged that if the approach should prove unsuccessful there would still be time to "run" the herd, as those who did not attempt the former method might keep in their saddles, and be ready to gallop forward.

All this was feasible enough; and it was therefore decided that the "approach" should have a trial. The trappers had already prepared themselves for this sort of thing. They were evidently desirous of giving us an exhibition of their hunter-prowess, and we were ready to witness it. We had noticed them busied with a pair of large wolf-skins, which they had taken off the animals entire, with the heads, ears, tails, etc., remaining upon the skins. The purpose of these was to enable the hunters to disguise themselves as wolves, and thus crawl within shooting distance of the buffalo herd.

Strange to say, this is quite possible. Although no creature is a greater enemy to the buffalo than the wolf, the former, as already stated, permits the latter to approach quite close to him without making any attempt to chase him off, or without exhibiting the slightest symptoms of fear on his own account. The buffalo cannot prevent the wolf from prowling close about him, as the latter is sufficiently active, and can easily get out of the way when pursued by the bulls—on the other hand, the buffaloes, unless when separated from the herd, or in some way disabled, have no fear of the wolf. Under ordinary circumstances they seem wholly to disregard his presence. The consequence is, that a wolf-skin is a favorite disguise of the Indians for approaching the buffalo, and our trappers, Ike and Redwood, had often practiced this ruse. We were likely then to see sport.

Both were soon equipped in their white wolf-skins, their heads being enveloped with the skins of the wolves' heads, and the remainder tied with thongs, so as to cover their backs and sides. At best the skins formed but a scanty covering to the bodies of the trappers; but, as we have already remarked, the buffalo

has not a very keen sense of sight, and so long as the decoys kept to leeward, they would not be closely scrutinized.

When fairly in their new dress, the hunters parted from the company, leaving their horses at the camp. The rest of us sat in our saddles, ready to gallop forward, in case the ruse did not succeed, and make that kind of a hunt called "running." Of course the trappers went as far as was safe, walking in an upright attitude; but long before they had got within shot, we saw both of them stoop down and scramble along in a crouching way, and then at length they knelt upon the ground, and proceeded upon their hands and knees.

It required a good long time to enable them to get near enough; and we on horseback, although watching every maneuver with interest, were beginning to get impatient. The buffalo, however, quietly browsing along the sward, seemed to be utterly unconscious of the dangerous foe that was approaching them, and at intervals one or another would fling itself to the earth in play, and after kicking and wallowing a few seconds, start to its feet again. They were all cows, with one exception—a bull—who seemed to be the guardian and leader. Even at a mile's distance, we could recognize the shape and size of the latter, as completely differing from all the rest. The bull seemed to be more active than any, moving around the flock, and apparently watching over their safety.

As the decoys approached, we thought that the bull seemed to take notice of them. He had moved out to that side of the herd, and seemed for a moment to scrutinize them as they drew near. But for a moment, however, for he turned apparently satisfied, and was soon close in to the gang.

Ike and Redwood had at length got so close, that we were expecting every moment to see the flash of their pieces. They were not so close, however, as we in the distance fancied them to be.

Just at this moment we perceived another buffalo—a large bull—running up behind them. He had just made his appearance over a ridge, and was now on his way to join the herd. The decoys were directly in his way, and these did not appear to see him until he had run almost between them, so intent were they on watching the others. His intrusion, however, evidently disconcerted them, spoiling their plans, while in the very act of being carried into execution. They were, no doubt, a little startled by the apparition of such a huge shaggy animal coming so suddenly on them, for both started to their feet as if alarmed. Their pieces blazed at the same time, and the intruder was seen rolling over upon the plain.

But the ruse was over. The bull that guarded the herd was witness to this odd encounter, and bellowing a loud alarm to his companions, set off at a lumbering gallop. All the rest followed as fast as their legs would carry them.

Fortunately they ran, not directly from us, but in a line that inclined to our left. By taking a diagonal course we might yet head them, and without another word our whole party put to the spur, and sprung off over the prairie.

It cost us a five mile gallop before any of us came within shooting distance; and only four of us did get so near—the naturalist, Besancon, the Kentuckian, and myself. Our horses were well blown, but after a good deal of encouragement we got them side by side with the flying game.

Each one chose his own, and then delivered his shot at his best convenience. The consequence was, that four of the cows were strewn out along the path, and rewarded us for our hard gallop. The rest, on account of saving our horses, were suffered to make their escape.

As we had now plenty of excellent meat, it was resolved to encamp again, and remain for some time on that spot, until we had rested our horses after their long journey, when we should make a fresh search for the buffalo, and have another "run" or two out of them.

CHAPTER XXV.

UNEXPECTED GUESTS.

WE found Ike and Redwood bitterly angry at the bull they had slain. They alleged that he had made a rush at them in coming up, and that was why they had risen to their feet and fired upon him. We thought such had been the case, as we had noticed a strange maneuver on the part of the bull. But for that, our guides believed they would have succeeded to their hearts' content; as they intended first to have shot the other bull, and then the cows would have remained until all had fallen.

A place was now selected for our night-camp, and the meat from the cows brought in and dressed. Over a fire of cottonwood logs we soon cooked the most splendid supper we had eaten for a long time.

The beef of the wild buffalo-cow is far superior to that of domestic cattle, but the "tit-bits" of the same animal are luxuries never to be forgotten. Whether it be that a prairie appetite lends something to the relish is a question. This I will not venture to deny; but certainly

the "harm of beef" in merry old England has no survivors to me so sweet as a roast rib of "fat cow," cooked over a cottonwood fire, and eaten in the open air, under the pure sky of the prairies.

The place where we had pitched our camp was upon the banks of a very small spring-stream, or creek, that, rising near at hand, meandered through the prairie to a not distant branch of the Arkansas River. Where we were, this creek was embanked very slightly; but, at about two hundred yards' distance, on each side, there was a range of bluffs that followed the direction of the stream. These bluffs were not very high, but sufficiently so to prevent any one down in the creek bottom from having a view of the prairie level. As the bottom itself was covered with very coarse herbage, and as a better grass—the buffalo—grew on the prairie above, we there picketed our horses, intending to bring them closer to the camp when night set in, or before going to sleep. The camp itself—that is the two tents, with Jake's wagon—were on the very edge of the stream, but Jake's mules were up on the plain, along with the rest of the *caravallada*.

It was still two hours before sunset. We had made our dinner, and, satisfied with the day's sport, were enjoying ourselves with a little brandy, that still held out in our good-sized keg, and a smoke. We had reviewed the incidents of the day, and were laying out our plans for the morrow. We were admonished by the coldness of the evening that winter was not far off, and we all agreed that another week was as long as we could safely remain upon the prairies. We had started late in the season, but our not finding the buffalo further to the east had made a great inroad upon our time, and spoiled all our calculations. Now that we had found them, a week was as much as we could allow for their hunt. Already frost appeared in the night hours, and made us uncomfortable enough, and we knew that in the prairie region the transition from autumn to winter is often sudden and unexpected.

The oldest and wisest of the party were of the opinion that we should not delay our return longer than a week, and the others assented to it. The guides gave the same advice, although these cared little about wintering on the prairie, and were willing to remain as long as we pleased. We knew, however, that the hardships to which we should be subjected would not be relished by several of the party, and it would be better for all to get back to the settlements before the setting in of severe weather.

I have said we were all in high spirits. A week's hunting, with something to do at it every day, would satisfy us. We should do immense slaughter on the buffalo, by approaching, running, and surrounding them. We should collect a quantity of the best meat, jerk and dry it over the fire, load our wagon with that, and with a large number of robes and horns as trophies, should go back in triumph to the settlements. Such were our pleasant anticipations.

I am sorry to say that these anticipations were never realized—not one of them. When we reached the nearest settlement, which happened about six weeks after, our party presented an appearance that differed as much from a triumphal procession as could well be imagined. One and all of us were afoot. One and all of us—even to the fat little doctor—were emaciated, ragged, footsore, frost-bitten, and little better than half alive. We had a number of buffalo-skins with us it is true, but these hung about our shoulders, and were for use, and not for show. They had served us for weeks for beds and blankets by night, and for great-coats under the fierce winter rains. But I anticipate. Let us return to our camp on the little creek.

I have said that we sat around the blazing fire discussing our future plans, and enjoying the future by anticipation. The hours passed rapidly on, and while thus engaged night came down upon us.

At this time some one advised that we should bring up the horses, but another said it would be as well to let them browse awhile longer, as the grass where they were was good, and they had been for some days on short commons.

"They will be safe enough," said this speaker—"we have seen no Indian sign; or if any of you think there is danger, let some one go up to the bluff, but by all means let the poor brutes have a good meal of it."

This proposal was accepted. Lanty was dispatched to stand guard over the horses, while the rest of us remained by the fire conversing as before.

The Irishman could scarcely have had time to get among the animals, when our ears were saluted by a medley of sounds that sent the blood to our hearts, and caused us to leap simultaneously from the fire.

The yells of Indians were easily understood, even by the "greenest" of our party, and these, mingled with the neighing of horses, the prancing of hoofs, and the shouting of our guard, were the sounds that reached us.

"Injuns!" cried Ike, springing up, and clutching his long rifle.

This wild exclamation was echoed by more than one, as each leaped back from the fire and ran to his gun.

In a few seconds we had cleared the brush-wood that thickly covered the bottom, and climbed out on the bluff. Here we were met by the terrified guard, who was running back at the top of his speed, and bellowing at the top of his voice.

"Och, murther!" cried he, "the savage bastes—there's a thousand ov thim! They've carried off the cattle—every leg—mules an' all, be jabers!"

Rough as was this announcement, we soon became satisfied that it was but too true. On reaching the place where the *cavallada* had been picketed, we found not the semblance of a horse. Even the pins were drawn, and the *lazoes* taken along. Far off on the prairie we could discern dimly a dark mass of mounted men, and we could plainly hear their triumphant shouts and laughter, as they disappeared in the distance.

We never saw either them or our horses again.

They were a party of Pawnees, as we afterwards learned, and no doubt had they attacked us, we should have suffered severely; but there were only a few of them, and they were satisfied with plundering us of our horses. It is just possible that after securing them they might have returned to attack us, had not Lanty surprised them at their work. After the alarm, they knew we would be on the lookout for them, and therefore were contented to carry off our animals.

It is difficult to explain the change that thus so suddenly occurred in our feelings and circumstances. The prospect before us—thus set afoot upon the prairie at such a distance from the settlements, and at such a season—was perfectly appalling. We should have to walk every inch of the way—carry our food, and everything else, upon our backs. Perhaps we might not be too much burdened with food. That depended upon very precarious circumstances—upon our hunting luck. Our "stock" in the wagon was reduced to only a few days' rations, and of course would go but a few days with us, while we had many to provide for.

These thoughts were after-reflections—thoughts of the next morning. During that night we thought only of the Indians, for of course we did not as yet believe they had left us for good. We did not return to sleep by the fire—that would have been very foolishness. Some went back to get their arms in order, and then returning, we all lay along the edge of the bluff, where the path led into the bottom, and watched the prairie until the morning. We lay in silence, or only muttering our thoughts to one another.

I have said until the morning. That is not strictly true, for before the morning that succeeded that *noche triste* broke upon us, another cruel misfortune befell us, which still further narrowed the circumstances that surrounded us. I have already stated that the herbage of the creek bottom was coarse. It consisted of long grass, interspersed with briars and bunches of wild pea vines, with here and there a growth of scrubby wood. It was difficult to get through it, except by paths made by the buffalo and other animals. At this season of the year the thick growth of annuals was now a mass of withered stems, parched by the hot suns of autumn until they were as dry as tinder.

While engaged in our anxious vigil upon the plain above, we had not given a thought either to our camp or the large fire we had left there.

All at once our attention was directed to the latter by a loud crackling noise that sounded in our ears. We sprang to our feet and looked into the valley behind us. The camp was on fire!

The brush was kindled all around it, and blazed to the height of several feet. We could see the blaze reflected from the white canvas both of wagon and tents, and in a few seconds these were licked into the hot flames and disappeared from our view.

Of course we made no effort to save them. That would have been an idle and foolish attempt. We could not have approached the spot without the almost certain danger of death. Already, while we gazed, the fire spread over the whole creek bottom, and passed rapidly both up and down the banks of the stream.

For ourselves there was no danger. We were up on the open prairie covered with only short grass. Had this caught also we knew how to save ourselves; but the upper level, separated by a steep bluff, was not reached by the conflagration that raged so fiercely below.

We stood watching the flames for a long while, until daylight broke. The bottom near where we were had ceased to burn, and now lay beneath us, smoking, smoldering and black. We descended, and picked our steps to where our camp had stood. The tents were like black cerements. The iron-work of the wagon alone remained; our extra clothing and provisions were all consumed. Even the produce of our yesterday's hunt lay among the ashes a charred and ruined mass!

CHAPTER XXVI.

A SUPPER OF WOLF-MUTTON.

OUR condition was now lamentable indeed. We even hungered for our breakfast, and had nothing to eat. The fire had consumed everything. A party went to look for the remains of the buffalo-bull killed by the guides, but returned without a morsel of meat. The wolves had cleaned the carcass to a skeleton. The marrow-bones, however, still remained, and these were brought in—afterward, the same parts of the four cows; and we made our breakfast on marrow—eating it raw—not but that we had fire enough, but it is less palatable when cooked.

What was next to be done? We held a consultation, and of course came to the resolve to strike for the nearest settlement—that was the frontier town of Independence, on the Missouri River. It was nearly three hundred miles off, and we calculated on reaching it in about twenty days. We only reckoned the miles we should have to traverse. We allowed nothing for the numerous delays caused by marshes and the fording of flooded streams. It afterward proved that our calculation was incorrect. It was nearly twice twenty days before we arrived at Independence.

We never thought of following the trail of the Indians to recover our horses. We knew they were gone far beyond pursuit; but even could we have come up with them, it would only have been to imperil our lives in an unequal strife. We gave up our horses as lost, and only deliberated on how we were to undertake the journey afoot.

Here a serious question arose. Should we at once turn our faces to the settlement, how were we to subsist on the way? By heading for Independence we should at once get clear of the buffalo range, and what other game was to be depended on? A stray deer, rabbit or prairie grouse might suffice to sustain a single traveler for a long time, but there were ten of us. How was this number to be fed on the way? Even with our horses to carry us in the pursuit of game, we had not been able on our outward journey to procure enough for all. How much less our opportunity now that we were afoot?

To head directly homeward therefore was not to be thought of. We should assuredly perish by the way.

After much discussion it was agreed that we should remain for some days within the buffalo range until we had succeeded in obtaining a supply of meat, and then, each carrying his share, we should begin our journey homeward. In fact, this was not a disputed point. All knew there remained no other way of saving our lives. The only difference of opinion was as to the direction we should ramble in search of the buffalo; for although we knew that we were on the outskirts of a great herd, we were not certain as to its whereabouts, and by taking a false direction we might get out of its range altogether.

It so happened, however, that fortune, lately so adverse, now took a turn in our favor, and the great buffalo drove was found without much trouble on our part. Indeed, almost without any exertion, further than that of loading and firing our guns, we came into possession of beef enough to have victualed an army. We had, moreover, the excitement of a grand hunt, although we no longer hunted for the sport of the thing.

During that day we scattered in various directions over the prairie, agreeing to meet again at night. The object of our thus separating was to enable us to cover a greater extent of ground and afford a better chance of game. To our mutual chagrin, we met at the appointed rendezvous, all of us empty-handed. The only game brought in was a couple of marmots (prairie dogs), that would not have been sufficient for the supper of a cat. They were not enough to give each of the party a taste, so we were compelled to go without supper. Having had but a meager breakfast and no dinner, it will not be wondered at that we were by this time as hungry as wolves; and we began to dread that death by starvation was nearer than we thought of. Buffaloes—several small gangs of them—had been seen during the day, but so shy that none of them could be approached. Another day's failure would place our lives in a perilous situation indeed; and as these thoughts passed through our minds, we gazed on each other with looks that betokened apprehension and alarm. The bright blaze of the camp-fire—for the cold had compelled us to kindle one—no longer lit up a round of joyful faces. It shone upon cheeks haggard with hunger and pallid with fear. There was no story for the delighted listener—no adventure to be related. We were no longer the historians, but the real actors in a drama—a drama whose *denouement* might be a fearful one.

As we sat gazing at each other, in hopes of giving or receiving some morsel of comfort and encouragement, we noticed old Ike silently glide from his place by the fire, and after a whisper to us to remain silent, crawl off on his hands and knees. He had seen something

doubtless, and hence his singular conduct. In a few minutes his prostrate form was lost in the darkness, and for some time we saw or heard no more of him. At length we were startled by the whip-like crack of the guide's rifle, and fancying it might be Indians, each sprung up in some alarm and seized his gun. We were soon reassured, however, by seeing the upright form of the trapper as he walked deliberately back toward the camp-fire, and the blaze revealed to us a large whitish object dangling by his side and partly dragging along the ground.

"Hurrah!" cried one, "Ike has killed game."

"A deer—an antelope," suggested several.

"No—o," drawled Redwood. "Tain't eyther, but I guess we won't quarrel with the meat. I could eat a raw jackass jest about now."

Ike came up at this moment, and we saw that his game was no other than a prairie wolf. Better than than hunger, thought all of us; and in a brace of seconds the wolf was suspended over the fire, and roasting in the hide.

We were now more cheerful, and the anticipation of such an odd viand for supper, drew jokes from several of the party. To the trappers such a dish was nothing new, although they were the only persons of the party who had partaken of it. But there was not one fastidious palate present, and when the "wolf-mutton" was broiled, each cleaned his joint or his rib with as much *gout* as if he had been picking the bones of a pheasant.

Before the supper was ended the wolf-killer made a second *coup*, killing another wolf precisely as he had done the former; and we had the gratification of knowing that our breakfast was now provided for. These creatures, that all along our journey had received nothing from us but anathemas, were now likely to come in for a share of our blessings, and we could not help feeling a species of gratitude toward them, although at the same time we thus killed and ate them.

The supper of roast wolf produced an agreeable change in our feelings, and we even listened with interest to our guides, who, appropriate to the occasion, related some curious incidents of the many narrow escapes they had had from starvation.

One in particular fixed our attention, as it afforded an illustration of trapper life under peculiar circumstances.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HARE-HUNTING AND CRICKET DRIVING.

THE two trappers, in company with two others of the same calling, were on a trapping expedition to one of the tributaries of the Great Bear river, west of the Rocky Mountains, when they were attacked by a band of hostile Utahs, and robbed not only of the produce of their hunt, but their horses and pack mules were taken from them, and even their arms and ammunition. The Indians could have taken their lives as well, but from the interference of one of the chiefs, who knew old Ike, they were allowed to go free, although in the midst of the desert region where they were, that was no great favor. They were as likely not to perish from hunger before they could reach any settlement—as at that time there was none nearer than Fort Hall upon the Snake river, a distance of full three hundred miles. Our four trappers, however, were not the men to yield themselves up to despair, even in the midst of a desert; and they at once set about making the most of their circumstances.

There were deer upon the stream where they had been trapping, and bear also, as well as other game, but what did that signify now that they had no arms? Of course the deer or antelopes sprung out of the shrubbery or scoured across the plain only to tantalize them.

Near where they had been left by the Indians was a "sage prairie," that is, a plain covered with a growth of the *artemisia* plant—the leaves and berries of which—bitter as they are—form the food of a species of hare, known among the trappers as the "sage rabbit." This creature is as swift as most of its tribe, but although our trappers had neither dog nor gun, they found a way of capturing the sage rabbits. Not by snaring either, for they were even without materials to make snares out of. Their mode of securing the game was as follows.

They had the patience to construct a circular fence, by wattling the sage plants together, and then leaving one side open, they made a "surround" upon the plain, beating the bushes as they went, until a number of rabbits were driven within the inclosure. The remaining part of the fence was then completed, and the rabbit-hunters going inside chased the game about until they had caught all that were inside. Although the fence was but about three feet in height, the rabbits never attempted to leap over, but rushed head-foremost against the wattles, and were either caught or knocked over with sticks.

This piece of ingenuity was not original with the trappers, as Ike and Redwood admitted. It is the mode of rabbit-hunting practiced by some tribes of Western Indians, as the poor Shoshonees and miserable "Diggers," whose whole

lives are spent in a constant struggle to procure food enough to sustain them. These Indians capture the small animals that inhabit their barren country by ways that more resemble the instinct of beasts of prey than any reasoning process. In fact there are bands of these Indians who can hardly be said to have yet reached the hunter state. Some of them carry as their sole armor a long stick with a hooked end, the object of which is to drag the *agama* and the lizard out of its cave or cleft among the rocks; and this species of game is transferred from the end of the stick to the stomach of the captor.

Impounding the sage hare is one of the master strokes of their hunter-craft, and forms a source of employment to them for a considerable portion of the year.

Our four trappers, then, remembering the Indian mode of capturing these creatures put it in execution to some advantage, and were soon able to satisfy their hunger. After two or three days spent in this pursuit they had caught more than twenty hares, but the stock ran out, and no more could be found in that neighborhood.

Of course only a few were required for present use, and the rest were dried over a sage fire until they were in a condition to keep for some days.

Packing them on their backs, the trappers set out, heading for the Snake River. Before they could reach Fort Hall their rabbit meat was exhausted, and they were as badly off as before. The country in which they now found themselves was if possible more of a desert than that they had just quitted. Even rabbits could not dwell in it, or the few that were started could not be caught. The *artemisia* was not in sufficient plenty to make an inclosure with, and it would have been hopeless to have attempted such a thing; as they might have spent days without trapping a single hare. Now and again they were tantalized by seeing the great sage cock, or, as naturalists call it, "cock of the plains," but they could only hear the loud "burr" of its wings, and watch it sail off to some distant point of the desert plain. This bird is the largest of the grouse kind, though it is neither a bird of handsome plumage, nor yet is it delicate in its flesh. On the contrary, the flesh, from the nature of its food, which is the berry of the wild wormwood, is both unsavory and bitter. It would not have deterred the appetites of our four trappers, could they have laid their hands upon the bird, but without guns such a thing was out of the question. For several days they sustained themselves on roots and berries. Fortunately it was the season when these are ripe, and they found here and there the prairie turnip, and in a marsh which they had to cross, they obtained a quantity of the celebrated Kansas roots.

All these supplies, however, did not prove sufficient. They had still four or five days' further journey, and were beginning to fear they would not get through it, for the country to be passed was a perfect barren waste. At this crisis, however, a new source of subsistence appeared to them, and in sufficient plenty to enable them to continue their journey without fear of want. As if by magic, the plain upon which they were traveling all at once became covered with large crawling insects of a dark brown color. These were the insects known among the trappers as "prairie crickets," but from the description given of them by the trappers, the hunter-naturalist pronounced them to be "locusts."

They have been known to arrive in a great city, coming not from afar, but out of the ground from between the bricks of the pavement and out of crevices in the walls, suddenly covering the streets with their multitudes. But this species does not destroy vegetation, as is the case with others of the locust tribe. They themselves form the favorite food of many birds, as well as quadrupeds. Hogs eagerly feed upon and destroy vast numbers of them; and even the squirrels devour them with as great a relish as they do nuts. These facts were furnished by the hunter-naturalist, but our trappers had an equally interesting tale to tell.

As soon as they set eyes upon the locusts and saw that they were crawling thickly upon the plain, they felt that they were safe. They knew that these insects were a staple article of food among the same tribes of Indians who hunt the sage hare. They knew, moreover, their mode of capturing them, and they at once set about making a large collection.

This was done by hollowing out a circular pit in the sandy earth, and then the four separating some distance from each other, drove the crickets toward a common center—the pit. After some maneuvering, a large quantity was brought together, and these being pressed upon all sides, crawled up to the edge of the pit, and were precipitated into its bottom. Of course the hole had been made deep enough to prevent them getting out until they were secured by the hunters.

At each drive nearly half a bushel was obtained, and then a fresh pit was made in another part of the plain, and more driven in, until our four trappers had as many as they wanted.

The crickets were next killed, and slightly parched upon hot stones, until they were dry enough to keep and carry. The Indians usually pound them, and mixing them with the seeds of a species of gramma grass, which grows abundantly in that country, form them into a sort of bread, known among the trappers as "cricket-cake." These seeds, however, our trappers could not procure, so they were compelled to eat the parched crickets "pure and unmixed;" but this, in the condition in which they then were, was found to be no hardship.

In fine, having made a bundle for each, they once more took the route, and after many hardships, and suffering much from thirst, they reached the remote settlement of Fort Hall, where, being known, they were of course relieved, and fitted out for a fresh trapping expedition.

Ike and Redwood both declared that they afterward had their revenge upon the Utab, for the scurvy treatment they had suffered, but what was the precise character of that revenge they declined stating. Both loudly swore that the Pawnees had better look out for the future, for they were not the men to be "set afoot on the parairy for nuthin'."

After listening to the relations of our guides, a night-guard was appointed, and the rest of us, huddling around the camp-fire, were soon as sound asleep as though we were reposing under damask curtains, on beds of down.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

A GRAND BATTLE.

THE spot we had chosen for our camp was near the edge of a small rivulet with low banks. In fact, the surface of the water was nearly on a level with that of the prairie. There was no wood, with the exception of a few straggling cottonwoods, and some of the long leaved willows peculiar to the prairie streams.

Out of the cottonwoods we had made our camp-fire, and this was some twenty or thirty paces back from the water, not in a conspicuous position but in the bottom of a bowl-shaped depression in the prairie; a curious formation, for which none of us could account. It looked as if fashioned by art, as its form was circular, and its sides sloped regularly downward to the center, like the crater of a volcano. But for its size, we might have taken it for a buffalo wallow, but it was of vastly larger diameter than one of these, and altogether deeper and more funnel-shaped.

We had noticed several other basins of the same sort near the place, and had our circumstances, been different, we should have been interested in endeavoring to account for their existence. As it was, we did not trouble ourselves much about the geology of the neighborhood we were in. We were only too anxious to get out of it; but seeing that this singular hole would be a safe place for our camp-fire—for our thoughts still dwelt upon the rascally Pawnees—we had kindled it there. Reclined against the sloping sides of the basin, with our feet resting upon its bottom, our party disposed themselves, and in this position went to sleep.

One was to be awake all night as guard; though, of course, all took turns, each awaking the sentinel whose watch was to follow his.

To the doctor was assigned the first two hours, and as we went to sleep, we could perceive his plump, rounded form seated upon the outer rim of the circular bank above us. None of us had any great faith in the doctor as a guard, but his watch was during the least dangerous time of night, so far as Indians are concerned. These never make their attack until the hours after midnight, as they know well that these are the hours of soundest sleep. The horse-drive of the previous night was an exception, but that had happened because they had drawn near and seen no horse-guard. It was a very unusual case. They knew that we were now on the alert; and if they had meditated further mischief, would have attempted it only after midnight hour. We had no apprehensions, therefore, and one and all of us being very much fatigued with the day's hunting afoot, slept soundly. The bank against which we rested was dry and comfortable; the fire warmed us well, and redoubled our desire for repose.

It appears that the doctor fell asleep on his post, or else we might all of us have been better prepared for the invasion that we suffered during that night.

I was awakened by loud shouts—the guides were uttering them. I sprang to my feet in the full belief that we were attacked by Indians, and at first thought caught hold of my gun. All my companions were roused about the same time, and laboring under a similar hallucination, went through a like series of maneuvers.

But when we looked up, and beheld the doctor stretched along the ridge, and still snoring soundly, we scarce knew what to make of it.

Ike and Redwood, however, accustomed to sleep with one eye open, had waked first, and had already climbed the ridge; and the double report of their guns confirmed our suspicions that we were attacked by Indians. What else could they be firing at?

"This way, all of you!" cried Redwood, mak-

ing signs for us to come up where he and his companion already were, waving their guns around their heads, and acting in a very singular manner, "this way; bring your guns, pistols, and all—quick with you!"

We all dashed up the steep, just at the moment that the doctor suddenly awaking, ran terrified down. As we pressed up, we could hear a mingling of noises, the tramp of horsemen as we thought, and a loud bellowing, as if from a hundred bulls. The last sounds could not well have been more like the bellowing of bulls, for in reality it was such. The night was a bright moonlight, and the moment we raised our heads above the scarp of the ridge we saw at once the cause of our alarm. The plain around us was black with buffaloes! Tens of thousands must have been in the drove which was passing us to a great depth on both sides. They were running at a fast trot—some of them even galloping, and in some places they were so thickly packed together, that one would be seen mounting upon the hind-quarters of the other, while some were thrown down, and trampled over by their companions.

"Hyur, hyur, all of ye!" cried Ike; "stand by hyur, or they'll git into the hole, and tramp us to shucks!"

We saw at a glance the meaning of these instructions. The excited animals were rushing headlong, and nothing seemed to stay their course. We could see them dashing into and across the little streamlet without making any account of it. Should they pour into the circle in which we stood, others would follow, and we might get mingled with the drove. There was not a spot on the prairie where we could have been safe. The impetuous mass was impelled from behind, and could neither halt nor change its course. Already a pair of bulls had fallen before the rifles of our guides, and to some extent prevented the others from breaking over the ring, but they would certainly have done so had it not been for the shouts and gestures of the trappers. We rushed to the side indicated, and each of us prepared to fire, but some of the more prudent held their loads for awhile, others pulled trigger, and a succession of shots from rifles, double-barrels, and revolvers soon raised a pile of dead buffaloes that blocked up the passage of the rest, as though it had been a barrier built on purpose.

A breathing-space was now allowed us, and each loaded his piece as fast as he was able. There was no time lost in firing, for the stream of living creatures swept on continuously, and a mark was found in a single glance of the eye.

I think we must have continued the loading and firing for nearly a quarter of an hour. Then the great herd began to grow thinner and thinner, until the last buffalo had passed.

We now looked around us to contemplate the result. The ground on every side of the circle was covered with dark hirsute forms, but upon that where we stood a perfect mass of them lay together. These forms were in every attitude, some stretched on their sides, others upon their knees, and still a number upon their feet, but evidently wounded.

Some of us were about to rush out of our charmed circle to complete the work, but were held back by the warning voices of the guides.

"For yur lives don't go," cried Redwood; "don't stir from hyur till we've knocked 'em all over. Ther's some o' them with life enough left to do for a ween o' ye yet."

So saying the trapper raised his long piece, selected one of the bulls that were seen on their feet, and sent him rolling over.

Another and another was disposed of in the same way, and then those that were in a kneeling position were reconnoitered to see if they were still alive, and when found to be so were speedily disposed of by a bullet.

When all were laid out we emerged from our hole and counted the game. There were no less than twenty-five dead immediately around the circle, besides several wounded that we could see straggling off over the plain.

We did not think of going to rest again until each of us had eaten about two pounds of fresh buffalo-beef, and what with the excitement of this odd adventure, and the jokes that followed—not a few of them leveled at our *quondam* guard—it was near morning before we closed our eyes again in sleep.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE ROUTE HOME.

WE awoke more confident of our future. We had now provisions enough and thousands of pounds to spare. It only remained for us to make it portable, and preserve it by drying; and this would occupy us about three full days. Our guides understood well how to cure meat without salt, and as soon as we had breakfasted all of us set to work. We had to pick and choose amid such mountains of meat. Of course the fat cows only were "hutschered." The bulls were left where they had fallen, to become the food of wolves, scores of which were now seen skulking around the spot.

A large fire was kindled, and near this was erected a framework of branches, on which was laid or suspended the meat, cut into thin slices and strips. These were placed at such a distance

from the fire that it acted upon them only to dry up the juices, and in less than forty-eight hours the strips became hard and stiff, so that they would keep for months without danger of spoiling. Meanwhile some employed themselves in dressing buffalo-skins, so as to render them light and portable, in other words, to make robes of them that would serve us for sleeping in.

At the end of the third day we had arranged everything, and were ready to set forth on our homeward journey. Each was to carry his own rations of the jerked meat, as well as his arms, robes and equipments. Of course, loaded in this manner, we did not expect to make a long daily journey, but, supplied as we were with provisions for thirty days, we had no fear but that before the end of that time we would reach Independence. We were in high spirits as we set out, although, before we had walked far, the pressure of our packs somewhat moderated the exuberance of our feelings; and before we had been fifty hours upon the road, an incident occurred that once more reduced us to a new state of despondency, and placed us once more in peril of our lives. Many an accident of flood and field, many a "hair-breadth escape" are to be encountered in a journey through prairie-land, and the most confident calculations of the traveler are often rendered worthless in a single moment. So we found to our consternation.

The accident which befell us was one of a deplorable character. We had reached the banks of a small stream, not over fifty yards in width, but very deep. After going down it for several miles no place could be found that was fordable, and at length we made up our minds to swim across, rather than spend more time in searching for a ford. This was easy enough, as we were all swimmers, and in a few minutes most of the party were safely landed on the other side.

But it remained to get our provisions and other matters over, and for this purpose a small raft had been constructed, upon which the packs of meat, robes, as well as our arms and ammunition, were laid. A cord was attached to the raft, and one of the party swam over with the cord, and then several taking hold commenced dragging over the raft with its load.

Although the stream was narrow, the current was strong and rapid, and just as the raft had got near the middle the towing line snapped, and away went the whole baggage downstream.

We all followed along the banks, in hopes of securing the raft when it should float near, and at first we had little apprehension about the matter. But to our mortification we now perceived a rapid just below, and there would be no chance of preventing the frail structure from going over it. The packs, robes, and guns had been laid upon the raft, not even fastened to it, for in our careless security, we never anticipated such a result.

It was too late to leap into the stream and endeavor to stop the raft. No one thought of such a thing. All saw that it was impossible, and we stood with anxious hearts watching the floating mass as it swept down and danced over the foaming waters. Then a shock was heard, the raft heeled round—and poised upon a sharp rock, stood for a moment in mid-stream, and then once more washed free it glided on into the still waters below.

We rushed down the banks, after an effort secured the raft, and drew it ashore; but to our consternation most of the provisions, with the guns and ammunition, were gone!

They had been tossed off in the very middle of the rapids, and of course were lost forever. Only three packs of the meat, with a number of robes, remained upon the raft.

We were now in a more serious condition than ever. The provision saved from the wreck would not last us a week, and when that was consumed how were we to procure more? Our means of killing game was taken from us. We had no arms but pistols and knives. What chance of killing a deer, or any other creature, with these?

The prospect was gloomy enough. Some even advised that we should go back to where we had left the buffalo carcasses. But by this time the wolves had cleaned them of their flesh. It would have been madness to go back. There was no other course but to head once more toward the settlements, and travel as fast as we could.

On half rations we continued on, making our daily journeys as long as possible. It was fortunate we had saved some of the robes, for it was now winter, and the cold had set in with extreme bitterness. Some nights we were obliged to encamp without wood to make a fire with, but we were in hopes of soon reaching the forest regions, where we should not want for that, and where, moreover, we would be more likely to meet with some game that we could capture.

On the third day after leaving the stream that had been so fatal to us, it began snowing, and continued to snow all night. Next morning the whole country was covered with a white mantle, and we journeyed on, at each step sink-

ing in the snow. This rendered our traveling very difficult, but as the snow was only a foot or so in depth we were able to make way through it. We saw many tracks of deer, but heeded them not, as we knew there was no chance of capturing the animals. Our guides said if it would only thaw a little, and then freeze again, they could kill the deer without their rifles. It did thaw during the day, and at night froze so hard, that in the morning there was a thick crust of ice upon the surface of the snow.

This gave us some hope, and next morning a deer-hunt was proposed. We scattered in different directions in parties of two and three, and commenced tracking the deer.

On reassembling at our night-camp, our different parties came back wearied and empty-handed.

The guides, Ike and Redwood, had gone by themselves, and were the last to reach the rendezvous. We watched anxiously for their return. They came at length, and to our joy each of them carried the half of a deer upon his shoulders. They had discovered the animal by his trail in the snow, and pursued it for miles, until its ankles and hoofs became so lacerated by the crust that it allowed them to approach near enough for the range of their pistols. Fortunately it proved to be a good-sized buck, and would add a couple of days to our stock of provisions.

With fresh venison to our breakfast, we started forth next morning in better spirits. This day we intended to make a long journey, in hopes of getting into heavy timber, where we might find deer more plentiful, and might capture some before the snow thawed away. But before the end of the day's journey we were so stocked with provision, that we no longer cared about deer or any other game. Our commissariat was once more replenished by the buffalo, and in a most unexpected manner. We were tramping along upon the frozen snow, when upon ascending the crest of a ridge, we saw five huge forms directly in front of us. We had no expectation of meeting with buffalo so far to the eastward, and were somewhat in doubt as to whether they were buffaloes. Their bodies, against the white hill-side, appeared of immense size, and as they were covered all over with hoar frost, and icicles depending from their long shaggy tufts of hair, they presented a singular aspect, that for awhile puzzled us. We took them for pine-trees!

We soon saw, however, that they were in motion, moving along the hill, and they could be no other than buffaloes, as no other animals could have presented such an appearance. Of course they were at a long distance, and this prevented us from at once recognizing them.

This was an important discovery, and brought our party to a halt and a consultation. What course was to be adopted? How were we to capture one or all of them? Had the snow been of sufficient depth the thing would have been easy; but although as it was, it might impede their running, they could get through it much faster than we. The only chance was to "approach" them by stealth; but then we must creep within pistol range, and that upon the plain white surface would be absolutely impossible. The foot of the hunter, crunching through the frozen snow, would warn them of their danger long before he could get near. In fact, when every circumstance had been weighed and discussed, we every one despaired of success. At that moment what would we not have given for a horse and a gun!

As we talked without coming to any determination, the five huge forms disappeared over the sharp ridge, that ran transversely to our course. As this ridge would shelter us from view, we hurried forward in order to see what advantages there were in the ground on its other side. We were in hopes of seeing timber that might enable us to get closer to the game, and we made for a small clump that grew on the top of the ridge. We reached it at length, and to our great chagrin, saw the five great brutes galloping off on the opposite side.

Our hearts fell, and we were turning to each other with disappointed looks, when a tumultuous shout of triumph broke from Redwood and the wolf-killer, and both calling to us to follow them, dashed off in the direction of the buffalo!

We looked to ascertain the cause of this strange conduct. A singular sight met our eyes. The buffalo were sprawling and kicking on the plains below; now rushing forward a short distance, then spreading their limbs, and halting, while some of them came heavily down upon their sides, and lay flinging their legs about them as if they had been wounded!

All these maneuvers would have been mysterious enough, but the guides rushing forward had already given the key to them, by exclaiming that *the buffalo were upon the ice!*

It was true. The snow-covered plain was a frozen lake, and the animals in their haste had galloped upon the ice, where they were now floundering.

It cost us but a few minutes' time to come up with them, and in a few minutes more—a few minutes of fierce deadly strife—in which pistols

cracked and knife-blades gleamed, five great carcasses lay motionless upon the blood-stained snow.

This lucky capture, for we could only attribute it to good fortune, was perhaps the means of saving the lives of our party. The meat furnished by the five bulls—for bulls they were—formed an ample stock, which enabled us to reach the settlements in safety. It is true we had many a hard trial to undergo and many a weary hours' walking, before we slept under a roof; but although in wretched plight, as far as looks went, we all got back in excellent health.

At Independence we were enabled to "rig" ourselves out, so as to make an appearance at St. Louis—where we arrived a few days after—and where, seated around the well filled table of the Planters' Hotel, we soon forgot the hardships, and remembered only the pleasures, of our wild hunter-life.

THE END.

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